

THE ODES OF JOHN KEATS

EDITED BY
R. WEEKES, M.A. Lond.



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THE ODES
OF
JOHN KEATS

EDITED BY

A. R. WEEKES, M.A. LOND.

EDITOR OF SHAKESPEARE: "AS YOU LIKE IT", "THE TEMPEST"
"CYMBELINE"; SHELLEY: "ADONAI'S", ETC.



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PREFATORY NOTE.

AMONG the works consulted in the preparation of this edition of Keats' *Odes* are the following: editions of his poems by Mr H. Buxton Forman, Mr E. de Sélincourt, Mr Laurence Binyon, Mr Robert Bridges, and Mr A. C. Downer; the *Life of Keats* by Sir Sidney Colvin: and, above all, the *Letters of Keats* edited by Mr Buxton Forman.

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INTRODUCTION.

1. Life of Keats.—The first thirty years of the nineteenth century are remarkable in England for the number of men of the highest genius who in them gave their best work to the world. To them belongs much of the finest verse of Wordsworth and Coleridge, together with the life's work of Byron, Shelley, and Keats. This wonderful age is often called the Second Renaissance, because its only parallel in our literature is the first great Renaissance which gave us Shakespeare and his comrades.

Like all great movements, the Second Renaissance cannot be summarised; but it may perhaps be said that among its chief elements were revolt against conventional diction and stereotyped metre, against formality and shallowness and self-satisfaction, and a re-awakening to freshness and realism of phrase, to the subtle harmonies of verse, to external nature, to human passion, to a sense of the wonder of the world, and to appreciation of all the glories of Greece and Rome and of our own older literature. Keats shows us in perfection the working of both the destructive and the creative energies.

Keats was a West Countryman by descent, but a Londoner by birth. His father, Thomas Keats, was employed as ostler in livery stables in Finsbury, married his master's daughter Frances Jennings, and succeeded to the business; he is described as a man "of so remarkably fine a common sense and native respectability" as to be generally esteemed, while his wife was a clever animated woman, and niece to a Captain Jennings who had served with distinction under Duncan at Camperdown. From this marriage sprang John the poet (1795); George; Tom; Edward, who died in infancy; and one daughter, Frances Mary, called Fanny.

It will be seen that Keats' birth was not aristocratic. This fact must be borne in mind : it explains slight inconsistencies in his character, in his art, and in his relations with other men, while it supplied a useful weapon to the ill-bred reviewers of his day.

His parents, however, were well-to-do and honourably ambitious, and at one time thought of sending their sons to Harrow. Finally they decided on an excellent private school kept at Enfield by the Rev. John Clarke. Here Keats first made acquaintance with English literature through Charles Cowden Clarke, under-master on his father's staff, a scholar, a musician, and a loving student of the older English verse.

Of Keats in his boyhood we have some lively pictures. At first "he was not attached to books. His penchant was for fighting. He would fight anyone, his brother among the rest." The same writer¹ speaks of "his extraordinary vivacity and personal beauty." Charles Cowden Clarke also refers to his ungovernable fits of passion, but adds that it was all "a wisp of straw conflagration, for he had an intensely tender affection for his brothers," and that "his high-mindedness, his utter unconsciousness of a mean motive, his placability, his generosity" made him a universal favourite.

His father died in 1804, and in 1805 Mrs. Keats married again, but unhappily. Ere long she left her second husband, Mr. William Rawlings, and went with her children to her mother's house at Edmonton. No more is heard of the stepfather.

At thirteen Keats' mind took a strong bent towards study. History, travel, fiction, nothing came amiss to him : he set himself to write a prose translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, and criticised the poem on the score of weakness of structure ; he studied modern politics in Leigh Hunt's Whig paper, the *Examiner* ; but most of all he felt the charm of Greek and Roman myth of which he read in Tooke's *Pantheon*, Spence's *Polymetis*, and Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary*.

¹ His schoolfellow Edward Holmes.

In 1810 his mother fell into a rapid consumption and died, to the great grief of Keats, who nursed her night and day. Old Mrs. Jennings then appointed two guardians, of whom Mr. Abbey, a City tea-dealer, was the acting partner; and by him Keats was taken from school at fifteen and bound apprentice to a surgeon, Mr. Hammond of Edmonton.

The connection lasted till 1814, but it was during this period that Keats, falling under the spell of Spenser, first learnt to dream of writing verse. Cowden Clarke says that he went through his first volume of the *Faery Queene* "like a young horse through a spring meadow ramping." And "he hoisted himself up, and looked burly and dominant, as he said, 'What an image that is—*sea-shouldering whales!*'" His earliest verses are an *Imitation of Spenser*. At eighteen Keats quarrelled with Hammond and went to live in London as a medical student, and by 1817 he had given up his medical studies altogether, to devote himself to poetry as his life's work.

Here it is necessary to say a few words as to the men of distinction with whom Keats now began to form intimacies. Chief among these were Severn, an artist; John Hamilton Reynolds, author of some charming minor verse, and devoted—like Keats—to boxing; Hazlitt, the critic; Coleridge; Lamb; Haydon, the painter, who brought the poet to see the beauty of the Elgin marbles¹; Shelley, destined to write his elegy; and Leigh Hunt. By these men, and most of all by the last-named, Keats was confirmed in his ambition.

The association with Hunt, however, was in some ways unfortunate. He and his brother were at this time fighting "the losing battle of liberalism." Imprisoned during two years for writing of the Prince Regent in the *Examiner* as "a fat Adonis of fifty," Hunt on his release in 1815 was hated by the great Tory reviews partly for his politics and partly for a lively satire on some contemporary Tory poets, including Wordsworth and Scott. To call oneself

¹ A collection of sculptures brought from Greece by Lord Elgin and placed in the British Museum in 1816. They consist chiefly of fragments from the Parthenon at Athens, executed under the direction of Phidias.

Hunt's friend was to court the same attacks as were made on him.

Keats' first volume of *Poems* appeared in 1817. It made little impression, and soon ceased to sell. It was followed in 1818, after a year spent chiefly at Hampstead and Teignmouth, by *Endymion*. From this time onward Keats' sky began to darken.

The first blow was the emigration to America of George Keats and his wife. "My love for my brothers," writes Keats, "from the early loss of our parents, and even from earlier misfortunes, has grown into an affection passing the love of woman." Then in the summer of 1818 Keats went with a great friend, Charles Brown, on a walking tour through the English lakes and the south of Scotland, not omitting to visit the tomb of Burns: over-fatigue and exposure brought on a touch of fever and a bad throat, the presage of disaster to come. Soon after his return, a couple of insolent and cruel reviews, in which criticism of the real failings of Keats' immature poetry is mixed with blind abuse of its most beautiful and original passages and with coarse sneers at his birth, appeared first in *Blackwood's Magazine* and then in the *Quarterly*.

It was long believed that these reviews killed Keats. That this is a complete error—that he was not the sort of man to be struck down by a hostile article—let his own words show: "I begin to get a little acquainted with my own strength and weakness. Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic on his own works. My own domestic criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what *Blackwood* or the *Quarterly* could possibly inflict; and also, when I feel I am right, no external praise can give me such a glow as my own solitary reperception and ratification of what is fine." And again: "This is a mere matter of the moment: I think I shall be among the English Poets after my death." Nevertheless Keats, being human, could not but wince under a persecution at once ruthless and powerful.

Later in 1818 there fell on him another and far heavier blow in the death from consumption of his brother Tom,

always ailing, dearly loved, and nursed by Keats to his death. For escape from lonely thoughts Keats now went to live with Brown in Hampstead; and here what should have been the joy, but turned out to be the crowning disaster, of his short life came to him in the shape of his passion for Fanny Brawne, who has been described as "a brisk and blooming, very young beauty, of the far from uncommon English hawk blond type." Keats became engaged to her at a time when the hereditary enemy in his blood was just fastening upon him, and from now till the end—his normal common sense sapped by bodily weakness—he was torn between passion and jealousy. He got little comfort from his love.

At first his work did not suffer, and to the close of 1818 and to 1819 belong his greatest poems. Late in 1819 he went to the Isle of Wight and then to Winchester.¹ Next he returned to London, determined to take up work as a journalist; for his means were at a low ebb, and the reviews had gone far to crush his prospects in literature. But the neighbourhood of Miss Brawne was more than he could bear, sickness was eating his life away, and in 1820 he broke down.

Brown writes: "One night, at eleven o'clock, he came into the house in a state that looked like fierce intoxication. Such a state in him I knew was impossible: it therefore was the more fearful. I asked hurriedly, 'What is the matter? you are fevered?'" Keats said that he had caught a chill, and Brown sent him to bed. "On entering the cold sheets, before his head was on the pillow, he slightly coughed, and I heard him say, 'That is blood from my mouth.' I went towards him: he was examining a single drop of blood upon the sheet. 'Bring the candle, Brown, and let me see this blood.' After regarding it steadfastly, he looked up in my face, with a calmness of countenance that I can never forget, and said: 'I know the colour of that blood: it is arterial blood. I cannot be deceived in that colour. That drop of blood is my death-warrant—I must die.'"

¹ The "Minster" city of the *Eve of St. Mark*.

From this time on the disease ran its usual course, deceptive rallies being followed by worse relapses. The appearance of his last volume of *Poems* in 1820, though it had fair success among literary men, came too late to give him pleasure. He struggled to write on, but the work of this period is very unequal. All that friends could do was done for Keats: he was nursed first by the Hunts and then by the Brawnes, while the Shelleys wrote suggesting that he should stay near them at Pisa; and when he was at length ordered to Italy by the doctors, he went not alone, but accompanied by the young artist Severn, who nursed him to the end with a woman's devotion.

They went first to Naples, but travelled back to Rome, and here, tormented by the thought of Fanny, soothed by Severn's reading from Jeremy Taylor's sweet old books, the *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*, Keats sank fast. On February 23, 1821, Severn writes, "the approaches of death came on. 'Severn—I—lift me up—I am dying—I shall die easy: don't be frightened—be firm, and thank God it has come.' I lifted him up in my arms. The phlegm seemed boiling in his throat, and increased until eleven, when he gradually sank into death, so quiet, that I still thought he slept."

Three days later he was buried in the Protestant cemetery at Rome, not far from the place where Shelley was to lie a year after. Keats' epitaph is of his own dictation: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water."

When the news of Keats' death reached Shelley, the latter, who had himself been slandered by the *Quarterly*, took for granted that it was the reviewers who had hounded Keats out of the world, and poured forth his passion of pity and indignation in one of the greatest of English elegies. Keats as seen in the *Adonais* is a shadowy and pathetic figure:—

O gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
 Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
 Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
 Dare the unpastured dragon in his den?

As a poem the *Adonais* is a triumph; as a portrait of

Keats it is negligible. This sensitive weakling is not the man who could write, with the artist's haughtiness: "I shall ever consider the public as debtors to me for verses, not myself to them for admiration, which I can do without. I have not the slightest feeling of humility towards the public or to anything in existence but the Eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the memory of great men."

Keats had many friends, and was deeply loved by them. Their reminiscences tell the same tale as is to be read in the stirring prose of his own letters. From those early days at school, when his "terrier courage" and generous temper gained him the liking of all, till the last hours of Severn's absorbed devotion, he remains the same fascinating character. Self-reliance, noble pride, and the traditional English courage against odds are united in this rare temperament with the sweeter qualities of unselfish tenderness.

2. The Reviews.—In view of what has been and will be said of the reviewers and their attacks on Keats, it will be well to examine these criticisms more closely. It is not certain whether *Blackwood's* or the *Quarterly* led the way in abusing Keats. The *Blackwood* review was the fourth of a series of articles *On the Cockney School of Poetry*,¹ and came out in August 1818. The name of the author is not known with certainty, though the choice seems to lie between Scott's son-in-law Lockhart and John Wilson ("Christopher North"). The following are passages taken from this article:—

"To witness the disease of any human understanding, however feeble, is distressing; but the spectacle of an able mind reduced to a state of insanity is of course ten times more afflicting. It is with such sorrow as this that we have contemplated the case of Mr. John Keats.

"The phrenzy of the 'Poems' was bad enough in its way; but it did not alarm us half so seriously as the calm, settled, imperturbable, drivelling idiocy of 'Endymion.'

"The old story of the moon falling in love with a shepherd, so

¹ That is, the school of Shelley, Keats, Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, and others.

prettily told by a Roman Classic, and so exquisitely enlarged and adorned by one of the most elegant of German poets, has been seized upon by Mr. John Keats, to be done with as might seem good unto the sickly fancy of one who never read a single line either of Ovid or of Wieland. If the quantity, not the quality, of the verses dedicated to the story is to be taken into account, there can be no doubt that Mr. John Keats may now claim *Endymion* entirely to himself. To say the truth, we do not suppose either the Latin or the German poet would be very anxious to dispute about the property of the hero of the 'Poetic Romance.' Mr. Keats has thoroughly appropriated the character, if not the name. His *Endymion* is not a Greek shepherd, loved by a Grecian goddess; he is merely a young Cockney rhymester, dreaming a phantastic dream at the full of the moon. Costume, were it worth while to notice such a trifle, is violated in every page of this goodly octavo.

"Mr. Hunt is a small poet, but he is a clever man. Mr. Keats is a still smaller poet, and he is only a boy of pretty abilities, which he has done every thing in his power to spoil.

"We venture to make one small prophecy, that his bookseller will not a second time venture £50 upon anything he can write. It is a better and a wiser thing to be a starved apothecary than a starved poet; so back to the shop, Mr. John, back to 'plaster, pills, and ointment boxes,' etc. But, for Heaven's sake, young Sangrado, be a little more sparing of extenuatives and soporifics in your practice than you have been in your poetry."

Less vulgar but not more intelligent was the review in the *Quarterly*, which belongs properly to the April number, but was held over till September 1818. The following are perhaps the most characteristic portions: it will be noticed that Keats' connection with the unpopular Leigh Hunt is largely responsible for the attitude of the reviewer—probably Gifford, the editor.¹

"Reviewers have been sometimes accused of not reading the works which they affected to criticise. On the present occasion we shall anticipate the author's complaint, and honestly confess that we have not read his work. Not that we have been wanting in our duty; far from it; indeed, we have made efforts, almost as superhuman as the story itself appears to be, to get through it: but, with the fullest stretch of our perseverance, we are forced to confess that we have not been able to struggle beyond the first of the four books of which this *Poetic Romance* consists.

¹ To whom Hazlitt wrote: "You do well to confine yourself to the hypocrite; for you have too little talent for the sophist" (*Letter to William Gifford*).

“We should extremely lament this want of energy, or whatever it may be, on our parts, were it not for one consolation—namely, that we are no better acquainted with the meaning of the book through which we have so painfully toiled than we are with that of the three which we have not looked into.

“It is not that Mr. Keats (if that be his real name, for we almost doubt that any man in his senses would put his real name to such a rhapsody)—it is not, we say, that the author has not powers of language, rays of fancy, and gleams of genius. He has all these; but he is unhappily a disciple of the new school of what has been somewhere called ‘Cockney Poetry,’ which may be defined to consist of the most incongruous ideas in the most uncouth language.

“Of this school Mr. Leigh Hunt, as we observed in a former number, aspires to be the hierophant. . . . This author is a copyist of Mr. Hunt, but he is more unintelligible, almost as rugged, twice as diffuse, and ten times more tiresome and absurd, than his prototype.

“Of the story we have been able to make out but little. It seems to be mythological, and probably relates to the loves of Diana and Endymion; but of this, as the scope of the work has altogether escaped us, we cannot speak with any degree of certainty, and must therefore content ourselves with giving some instances of its diction and versification. And here again we are perplexed and puzzled. At first it appeared to us that Mr. Keats had been amusing himself and wearying his readers with an immeasurable game at *bouts rimés*; but, if we recollect rightly, it is an indispensable condition at this play that the rhymes, when filled up, shall have a meaning; and our author, as we have already hinted, has no meaning.

“He seems to us to write a line at random, and then he follows, not the thought excited by this line, but that suggested by the *rhyme* with which it concludes. There is hardly a complete couplet enclosing a complete idea in the whole book. He wanders from one subject to another, from the association, not of ideas, but of sounds; and the work is composed of hemistichs which, it is quite evident, have forced themselves upon the author by the mere force of the catchwords on which they turn.

“We shall select, not as the most striking instance, but as that least liable to suspicion, a passage from the opening of the poem:—

‘Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep; and such are daffodils,
With the green world they live in; and clear rills
That for themselves a cooling covert make
’Gainst the hot season; the mid-forest brake
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms;
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead,’ etc.

Here it is clear that the word, and not the idea, *moon*, produces the simple sheep and their shady *boon*, and that 'the *dooms* of the mighty dead' would never have intruded themselves but for the 'fair musk-rose *blooms*.'

"But enough of Mr. Leigh Hunt and his simple neophyte. If any one should be bold enough to purchase this *Poetic Romance*, and so much more patient than ourselves as to get beyond the first book, and so much more fortunate as to find a meaning, we entreat him to make us acquainted with his success. We shall then return to the task which we now abandon in despair, and endeavour to make all due amends to Mr. Keats and to our readers."

3. The work and genius of Keats.—When Keats died he was hardly known outside his own literary circle, and even there it was taken for granted that his work was doomed, as Shelley puts it, to "total neglect and obscurity." *Blackwood's*, with singular brutality, had a last fling at him: "A Mr. John Keats, a young man who had left a decent calling for the melancholy trade of Cockney poetry, has lately died of consumption, after having written two or three little books of verses, much neglected by the general public." Byron, though he said that he did not "envy the man, whoever he was, that attacked and killed him," dismissed the whole business with a contemptuous shrug:—

John Keats, who was killed off by one critique
Just as he really promised something great,
If not intelligible, without Greek
Contrived to talk about the gods of late
Much as they might have been supposed to speak.
Poor fellow! His was an untoward fate;
'Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle,
Should let itself be snuffed out by an article.

Many years later Matthew Arnold, the most authoritative Victorian critic of English literature, said of Keats, "He is with Shakespeare." Never has there been a more complete reversal of judgment.

If the work of Keats be compared with the work of other English writers produced by the age of twenty-five, he stands supreme. If no such deduction be made—if his work be judged on its merits alone—he must still be ranked with the highest. Much that he wrote is immature

and inferior, certainly; but the gold left after sifting is so pure—the verse so noble alike in spirit and in form, and the influence so wide and durable—that he takes his stand with Wordsworth and with Shelley, above Byron or Coleridge.

That this is so was due chiefly to native genius. Various influences, however, affected him in turn, and these must now be reviewed in their relation to his chief works.

Keats published three volumes of verse: *Poems* in 1817, *Endymion* in 1818, and *Lamia and other Poems* in 1820. Since his death admirers, with a zeal for which he would not have thanked them, have raked together every scrap of his writing that could be found, from an early rhyme on catching tittlebat to such sacredly personal matter as the *Ode To Fanny* (No. 11 in this volume).

In the *Poems* of 1817 Keats is under the spell of Hunt. He has read and loved Spenser, but has not yet mastered the secrets of Spenser's power. "A freer spirit of versification" and "a free and idiomatic cast of language," such as Hunt recommended in theory, are often reduced in Keats' practice—as they were by Hunt himself—to slipshod scansion and an intolerable Cockney familiarity of style. Hunt himself appears as "the wrong'd Libertas" who "elegantly chats and talks." Elsewhere Keats does not attain even to Hunt's level: there are verses in this collection in the weakest style of late "Classic" versifying. Of such are the posthumous *Ode* and *Hymn to Apollo* (Nos. 1 and 2 in this volume).

Side by side with these, however, appears other work in which the voice of the true Keats can plainly be heard. His felicities of phrase, his sensitive insight into nature are seen in "I stood tiptoe":—

Sweet peas on tip-toe for a flight,
With wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white,
And taper fingers catching at all things
To bind them all about with tiny rings.

Still more important is *Sleep and Poetry*, a manifesto of Romantic revolt, in which the youth of twenty-one throws

down the gauntlet to the whole army of "Classic" critics. In an age when "wit and poetry and Pope" were still regarded by many as synonymous terms, Keats upholds the old glorious tradition of English verse.¹

In *Endymion*, which yields Nos. 3 to 6 in this volume, Keats' art is still immature, but shows a great advance. The narrative is confused, the allegory is dim—indeed, no two critics seem to agree about it—but there are many passages of exquisite verse, wonderful gleams of landscape, fine philosophic ideals.²

The predominant influences are now Spenser, Wordsworth, and Shakespeare. Keats' best work at this time—notably the great Ode *To Sorrow*—has a vigorous morning freshness about it which we shall hardly find again. It is all very well for him to write of sorrow: there is no real sadness in this outpouring of the joy of life. It is a picture glowing with colour, instinct with animation—the work of a young bold mind which has neither regret for the past nor fear for the future.

In 1820 followed that small book which contained—as some hold—the richest treasures of nineteenth century verse: Keats' finest work in narrative, his fragment of an epic, and his immortal odes.

By this time he has gained from earlier writers all that they are ever to give him—perhaps all that they ever could have given him. His letters show this. "Thank God I can read and perhaps understand Shakespeare to his depths," he writes in 1818; and again, to Haydon, "I remember your saying that you had notions of a good genius presiding over you. I have of late had the same thought . . . is it too daring to fancy Shakespeare this Presider?" Allusions to Wordsworth's philosophy and to his deepest—and driest—poems are strewn broadcast over Keats' letters from 1817 onward. The structure of the couplet in *Lamia* is influenced by Dryden. Miltonic severity and concision go to produce *Hyperion*. Milton in turn gives way to Chatterton, as more purely and idiomatically English. Yet the days of imitation are over.

¹ Cp. extracts given on p. 30.

² See p. 70 for a fuller treatment of the poem.

and the verse of this period is absolutely original: Keats takes from each what each has to give, but works upon it at his own free will.

At this time also there is found in his poetry an element which requires to be treated apart (§ 5), the influence of Greece. This strain, strangely linked with the tumultuousness of the Renaissance and the Southern warmth of a highly sensuous nature, is strong in much of the 1820 work—chiefly in *Hyperion* and in the Odes.

Lamia is the tale of a serpent who in the form of a beautiful woman gains the love of an Athenian youth, but is disenchanted at her wedding feast by a "bald-head philosopher" whose "demon eyes" make her "melt into a shade."

In *Isabella* Keats versifies in musical *ottava rima*¹ a tale from Boccaccio of the loves of Isabella and Lorenzo, and the murder of Lorenzo by the lady's cruel brothers. Learning from the ghost of Lorenzo, who comes to her by night, that he has been slain and buried in the forest, Isabella searches till she finds his grave, and bears away with her the head of her lover, which she hides in a pot of sweet basil; but the brothers, who cannot understand why she sits all day weeping over her plant, break the pot and carry away the head, and Isabella, her last comfort lost, dies of grief.

Another Italian legend supplies the thin thread on which are woven the rich embroideries of *St. Agnes' Eve*. Here Keats is at the height of his Romantic manner. Every stanza is like some old painting, suffused with the light of "St. Agnes' moon."

It is a marked change to turn from these to *Hyperion*: from the dim warmth of Italian romance to the marble clearness of Classic myth, from the free wanderings of narrative to the grand deliberate movement of epic. There are many passages of *Hyperion* that are as Romantic as anything else that Keats ever wrote: the picture of the fallen gods, for example,

¹ I.e. stanzas of eight iambic pentameter lines each, rhyming abababcc.

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LIEP.

like a dismal cirque
 Of Druid stones upon a forlorn moor,
 When the chill rain begins at shut of eve
 In dull November, and their chancel vault,
 The Heaven itself, is blinded throughout night.

But the Miltonic accent also prevails :—

The God of the Sea,
 Sophist and sage, from no Athenian grove,
 But cogitation in his watery shades,
 Arose, with locks not oozy.

And the Miltonic accent blends, as in the above passage, with the accent of the Classics, with syntactical constructions adopted from Latin, with the breadth and solemn quiet of Greek art.

To turn to the great Odes (Nos. 12 and 14-18 in this volume) is to be brought into personal contact with the mind of Keats. An ode is by the conditions of the form subjective, as epic or narrative work should never be; and Keats, like Shelley in the *Ode to the West Wind* and Wordsworth in the *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*, expresses here his own feelings and shows how they are coloured by the events of his life.

Some critics, in their anxiety to deny that the reviews killed Keats, have gone so far as to imply that they did not affect him at all: this is not very likely to be true, and it is not true. They could not fail to fret and sadden him. They taught him that hard lesson of the world's indifference. They wrecked his money prospects, too: in 1819 he writes of "the mire of a bad reputation which is continually rising against me," and adds "my name among the literary fashionables is vulgar." The death of Tom Keats and the emigration of George had left him lonely, and the long agony of his love-passion was wearing out his spirits, while health was beginning to fail. Gone are the joyousness of youth and brimming vitality: through all the great Odes is heard a note of solemnity, deepening now and then to poignant suffering.

Through all runs also the same haunting sense of unreality.

All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.

Indolence is better than ambition. The nightingale's song is an illusion, and an illusion which soon fails, leaving the listener alone with his cares and griefs. The world's truest sadness dwells with beauty and joy, for the pain of suffering is less keen than the pain of knowing that beauty and joy will fade. There is no refuge but in Art, the serene, immortal, unchangeable: the temple of thought which the poet builds for himself in the *Ode To Psyche*, the marble world which lives for ever on the carved shape of a Grecian urn.

This spirit of sadness is not the whole philosophy of Keats, but it is the side of his thought that predominates in the last year of his life: it strikes the keynote of the Odes.

After this publication Keats issued no more books, and one need not linger over the rest of his work. *King Otho*, a tragedy written in collaboration with Brown, has the ill-controlled violence and forcible yet shallow characterisation of a play of Massinger. *Stephen* promises better and has lines of Shakespearean ring, but is a mere fragment. The recast of *Hyperion* is more interesting to the student of Keats' thought than to the lover of poetry: written with failing powers, it is unequal, and contains some splendid passages of ripe and wise philosophy amid others that are relatively weak. Where the previous version is incorporated and altered, the alterations are usually for the worse. The only perfect things in Keats' latest work are the wonderful Romantic ballad of *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, which some have considered the best of all his poems, the alluring but fragmentary *Eve of St. Mark*, and some sonnets, of which the intolerably pathetic "Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art," written on shipboard, was probably his farewell to life.

After this brief review of Keats' chief poems, it remains to ask what were the qualities that made him great and that distinguished him from his great comrades.

First it may be said that the *differentia* of Keats, his root-quality, is the disinterested love of beauty. He, more

than any of his fellows, grasps the essential oneness of beauty and truth: his cry is "Seek ye first" the ideal beauty "and all other things shall be added unto you." Because he had not time to sing out all that was in him, he has been rather more misunderstood than most other men of genius, and his creed has been taken to mean beauty of form alone. But Keats, like Shakespeare, thought much about questions of conduct, and his ideal was the Greek ideal of beauty inward and outward, the perfect soul of verse as well as the perfect form. And, precisely because he held this ideal, he was free from the wish to preach which beset Wordsworth and Shelley. There is no more direct moralising in *St. Agnes' Eve* than in *King Lear*: in both the poet leaves his work to speak for itself.

This feeling influences his work as one of the supreme poets of Nature. To Wordsworth Nature is a living being with power to influence man for good or ill:—

To every natural form, rock, fruit, or flower,
Even the loose stones that cover the high-way,
I gave a moral life: I saw them feel,
Or linked them to some feeling.

Shelley on the other hand, though not here a moralist, is an idealist, the poet "of sky and sea and cloud, the gold of dawn and the gloom of earthquake and eclipse." The world that he paints, and that he makes symbolic of men's passions, is rarely a world that we know. The *Ode to the West Wind* was the result of a day of storm in Italy, but there is no more of real Italy in it than there is of England in a landscape by Turner:—

O wild west wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes . . .
Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,
Angels of rain and lightning . . .

Criticism itself is carried away like a leaf upon such a

wind of poetry, but this beauty is not of earth. Turn now to Keats' address to Autumn.¹ Here again is the supreme beauty which is a law to itself, but how different! In the first stanza there is nothing which the very ploughman cannot see for himself. Realism, the quest of pure truth, informs every detail. Keats neither gives a moral life to Nature, nor attempts to pass beyond her familiar manifestations. His aim, perhaps the highest of all, is to see and to render Nature as she is.

He is the predecessor of the Tennysonian school in that all his Nature-work is founded on exact knowledge; not indeed the knowledge of the botanist and man of science—Keats died, one must remember, at twenty-five—but that of one who has steeped himself in natural lore from his earliest years, deliberately observing and storing up the minutest details of what he sees.

Another marked characteristic of Keats is his "curious felicity" of phrasing. He once wrote to Shelley: "You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore." That Keats followed his own advice appears in almost every line of his later work. Illustrations might easily be strung together: a few may suffice. For magical use of compound expressions one may cite "high-sorrowful," "soft-conched," "sapphire-regioned"; for aptness of single epithets, "wailful choir," "verdurous glooms," "sunburnt mirth"; for memorable phrases and immortal lines, "fast-fading violets covered up in leaves," or

Magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Another quality in which his work excels is that of sheer music. This, the birthright of great poets, was given to Keats in full measure, even in early days: for example the *Hymn to Apollo*, which has few other merits, moves with a springing vigour and a fulness of tone worthy of a better meaning. When we come to the great Odes, we find musical effects such as are unsurpassed

¹ See p. 64.

in English lyric verse. Those *To a Nightingale*, *On a Grecian Urn*, *To Psyche*, and *To Autumn* are a succession of such rich and melancholy strains as some great master evokes from the varying forces of an orchestra—ranging now high now low, from unearthly sweetness to solemn undertones.

4. **The nature of an Ode.**—The word *ode* (ὕδῃ) is simply the Greek for “song,” and was applied by the Greeks to any kind of poetic composition that was written to be sung to music, from a dirge to a drinking-song—that is to say, to any kind of lyric verse; for the Greek idea of lyric poetry was simply “poetry written to be sung to music,” i.e. the lyre. Greek odes were of two kinds: those written for a single voice, such as the lyrics of Sappho and Alcaeus (seventh century B.C.), and those written for a choir, of which the best examples are the odes of Pindar (500 B.C.). The former were regular and fairly simple in metre, the latter highly elaborate.

The great English writers of odes before Keats were Spenser, Milton, Dryden, Gray, Collins, and Wordsworth; and a glance at their work will show that for our literature the Greek definition must be changed. The idea of the musical accompaniment has been lost: Milton's *Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity* could not well be set to music, yet it is an ode, while the much-sung lyrics of Burns are not odes. On the other hand, the name of ode is now applied to one type of lyric poem only. Thus the definition has both widened and narrowed. It may be re-stated as “a lyric poem of elaborate metrical structure, solemn in tone, and usually taking the form of an address,”¹ very often to some abstraction or quality.

English odes fall roughly into three classes: regular and Pindaric, regular and simple, and irregular. In the first group Gray's *Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard* stand supreme and almost alone. They are written in groups of stanzas; each group consists of three stanzas, of which the

¹ There are exceptions to this rule. But in so elastic a subject a rule wide enough to cover all exceptions would be so vague as to be valueless.

first two exactly resemble each other in structure, and also resemble the first two stanzas of each other group, while the last stanzas of all the groups are like one another, but unlike all the rest.

To the second class belong Spenser's *Four Hymns*, Milton's *Nativity Hymn*, Gray's *Eton College* and others, and Collins' *Ode to Evening*, *Ode written in 1746*, and others. To the third class, perhaps the most important of all, belong Spenser's *Epithalamion* and *Prothalamion*, Dryden's *Song for Saint Cecilia's Day* and *Alexander's Feast*, Collins' *The Passions*, and Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*.

Some confusion has been introduced into the subject by Cowley, who in 1656 published a collection of poems in long irregular stanzas, which he entitled "Pindaric Odes." In reality they were not Pindaric, but belonged to the same type as Spenser's *Epithalamion*, with this difference—that the *Epithalamion* is a noble poem of hauntingly musical rhythm, while the so-called *Pindarics* are harsh and awkward to the point of grotesqueness.

Among Keats' contemporaries and successors in the writing of odes the most distinguished are Shelley, whose *Skylark* and *West Wind* are written in regular stanzas; Coleridge, with his irregular *Dejection* and blank verse *Hymn before Sunrise*; Tennyson, whose irregular *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* is not one of his happiest efforts; and Swinburne, from whose many triumphs may be singled out the splendid and regular *Hymn to Proserpine*.

Keats himself does not attempt the strict Pindaric, which has, indeed, not thriven in English soil. His structure is sometimes regular and simple, as in *To Fancy*, and sometimes represents a mean between this and the third or irregular class. His most characteristic form consists of a group of stanzas of highly complex structure, but regular, or nearly regular, in their resemblance to one another. None of Keats' Odes consists, as does Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode*, of a succession of absolutely dissimilar stanzas (varying in length from 8 lines to 39).

On the whole, it would seem that of all previous writers of odes in England the one most akin to Keats in metrical form was Spenser, whose nuptial odes are written in long stanzas of complex structure, with involved rhyme-scheme, and trimeter lines occurring at rare intervals to break their normal pentameters, just as in the Ode *To a Nightingale* and *To Psyche*. Spenser's stanzas, it is true, resemble each other exactly, as Keats' do not, except in the Ode *To a Nightingale*; but this difference was probably due to Keats' habitual carelessness—which in its turn may be traced back to the fact that he looked upon all his work as immature and perishable stuff.

5. The Hellenic spirit in Keats.—It is well known that the great Renaissance of the early sixteenth century drew its life largely from the renewed study of Greek letters. That the same is true of the second Renaissance is illustrated by Keats in England as by Chénier (1762-1794) in France. If it be asked how the son of an ostler came to be the typical representative of Greek thought, in a sense in which Wordsworth and Coleridge and even Shelley were not, the answer can only be given in Shelley's own words, "*Keats was a Greek.*"

What, exactly, did Shelley mean by saying so? To meet this question we must ask ourselves another: Through what channels did the Greek spirit come to Keats? The answer is three-fold: it came to him by literature, by sculpture, and by innate tendency. It is the last of these forces that is the most potent: without it the others would have had little or no effect, for they were in reality slight.

As regards literature: Keats could not read Greek, and his knowledge of the Greek classics was therefore derived from translations and books of reference. When at school, he seemed to learn by heart—so we are told—Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary*. Homer came to him in Chapman's translation, and he has himself described its effect upon him in the famous sonnet written at dawn after the first night spent over the *Iliad*:—

" Much have I travelled in the realms of gold . . .
 Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
 That deep-brow'd Homer rul'd as his demesne ;
 Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
 Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold :
 Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
 When a new planet swims into his ken ;
 Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
 He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
 Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
 Silent, upon a peak in Darien."

When we have said this, we have exhausted the greater part of Keats' direct contact with Greek literature, a slight and imperfect matter compared with the wide and fine scholarship of Shelley.

A second sonnet—that *On Seeing the Elgin Marbles*,¹ "My spirit is too weak" (1817)—reveals the important and unusual influence exerted over Keats by Greek sculpture. A critic has said that *Hyperion* "is in poetry what the Elgin marbles are in sculpture"; and it is certain that the "calm grandeur" of Greek art, its majesty and symmetry and simplicity, its economy of ornament and subordination of parts to the whole, came to Keats through the sight of these marbles. This influence is most plain in the Odes *On Indolence* and *On a Grecian Urn*.

But stronger than either of these is the third element in Keats' art—the inborn, temperamental "Greekness" of his mind. The Hellenes were lovers of beauty; so is Keats. To him, as to them, the expression of beauty is the ideal of all art; and that such an ideal should be full, lofty, and severe is due to the fact that for him, as for them, beauty is not exclusively material, nor spiritual, nor intellectual, but finds its expression in the fullest development of all that goes to make up human perfection.

He is a Greek, too, in his manner of personifying the powers of Nature. When Gray wrote of the rosy-bosomed Hours and Collins of pensive Eve or the bright-haired Sun, they did no more than use a picturesque figure of speech imitated from a classic model. But with Keats it

¹ See note on page 9.

is a different matter. His Autumn (17) is a divinity in human shape: she sets her hand to all manner of work, and directs every operation of harvest. This is the typical attitude of the Greek, to whom the distinction between god, demi-god, and heroic man was faint and variable. The Pan of Greek myth was more than half human,—whoever wandered in lonely places of the woods might expect to hear his pipe or even to catch a glimpse of his hairy body and puck-nosed face; and the Pan of Keats' Ode is half human too, as he sits by the riverside or wanders at evening in the meadows.

In truth, Byron was right: Keats has "contrived to talk about the gods much as they might have been supposed to speak." The world of Greek paganism lives again in his verse, with all its frank sensuousness and joy of life, with all its mysticism and deep-hearted questioning of the natural world. More intensely even than Shelley the pantheist, Keats looks back and lives again in the time

"When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
Holy the air, the water, and the fire."

6. Metre.—Keats is one of the most musical of poets. His masters were the Elizabethans, more especially Spenser and Milton. To read his verse aloud is good training for one who wishes to realise the richness and sonority of English. In the earlier Odes the most marked characteristics are strength and fulness and animation: in the Ode *To Sorrow*, for example, and especially in the passage beginning "And, as I sat" (48), the lines seem to leap and throb with life. Later, Keats' verse becomes more languid, but also more subtle and more delicately harmonious.

In *To Pan* (3) and *To Neptune* (4) Keats uses mainly the "heroic couplet," i.e. pentameter iambic lines rhyming in pairs, the well-nigh universal metre of Pope and all other "Classic" versifiers.¹ Nothing shows more plainly the position of Keats as a champion of revolt than his

¹ Here and there short lines occur, but the heroic couplet is the basis of both these odes.

handling of this form. With the "Classic" school it was regular, polished, and monotonous in the highest degree. In each couplet there was a slight pause at the end of the first and a marked pause at the end of the second line; that is to say, if the couplet was read aloud the sense and punctuation compelled such pauses to be made. The caesura (break) within the line fell as a rule after the second foot, or at most in the middle or at the end of the third. As far as possible, extra syllables were avoided, and the line conformed to the *norm* or model of five iambic feet. But if we take at random a passage from the *Ode To Pan* we shall find how widely Keats varies from this model:—

Be still || the ún | imág | inà | ble lódge
 For sól | itàr | y thínk | ings ; || súch | as dódge
 Conceþt | ion || tò | the vér | y bourne | of héaven,
 Then leáve | the nák | ed braín : || be stíll | the leáven
 Thát, || spréad | ing ìn | this dúll | and clódd | ed eárrh,
 Gíves it | a touçh | ethé | r(e) al— || à | néw bírrh :
 Be stíll || a sým | bol òf | immén | sity.

The caesura falls in or after any foot Keats pleases; there is no sense-pause after *dodge*, *leaven*, for the speaking voice rapidly runs on or "overflows" to the next line; and the accent is often inverted, falling on the first instead of the second syllable in the foot, while in some lines there are only four or even three strong stresses, instead of five.

Nor is this passage in any way peculiar, for the same characteristics appear throughout all his work in couplets; cp. the *Ode To Neptune*:—

Dear ún | seen líght | in dárk | ness ! || éo | lipsèr.

Here the final syllable, although it has to supply the rhyme, is so weak that it is impossible to make the slightest pause upon it.¹

That these changes were conscious and deliberate we

¹ See note on 4. 42.

know from Keats' own manifesto of revolt, *Sleep and Poetry* (1817), where he politely describes the Classic School as follows:—

A schism
Nurtured by foppery and barbarism
Made great Apollo blush for this his land.
Men were thought wise who could not understand
His glories : with a puling infant's force
They sway'd about upon a rocking-horse,

videlicet the Heroic couplet,

And thought it Pegasus. Ah, dismal-soul'd !
The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd
Its gathering waves—ye felt it not. The blue
Bar'd its eternal bosom, and the dew
Of summer nights collected still to make
The morning precious : beauty was awake !
Why were ye not awake ? But ye were dead
To things ye knew not of—were closely wed
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule
And compass vile.

The watchwords of the "Classics" were correctness and polish : the watchwords of Keats are freedom and music. It must be borne in mind that, although polish is often called a mark of Classic verse, yet such verse is far easier to write, and write well, than Romantic verse. The heroic couplets of Pope were to a large extent "a mere mechanic art," so far as form went : the free, varied, and musical couplets of Keats could only have been written by a man of genuine poetic power.

What has been said above of his couplets holds good of his other verse forms. In all we find the same variety in the falling of the caesura, and the same abundance of "overflowing" lines and inverted accents.

Many critics hold that he is least successful in the rhyming octosyllabics which he employs for *To Fancy*, "*Bards of Passion*," and the poem *On the Mermaid Tavern*. Despite his memories of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, the lines halt now and then, owing to the presence of too many stressed syllables ; thus,

Cloýs | with tást | ing : Whát | dó thén ?

is as awkward in sound as in syntax. Nevertheless there

is a "weird music" in many of these stanzas—notably in the famous passage of "*Bards of Passion*," beginning "Yes, and those of heaven commune" (5-22), with its clear echo of *Comus*.

The rest of the Odes are written in various metres more or less irregular, many of which are of Keats' own devising. No good purpose would be served by giving the rhyme-scheme of each ode: it will suffice to take for an example the Ode *To a Nightingale*, which alone adheres in every later stanza to the structure of the first.¹

This ode consists of eight stanzas, each made up of nine pentameter lines and one trimeter line—the eighth. The rhyme-scheme is *ababcdecde*. The stanza may thus be said to fall into two sections, the first being a heroic quatrain, while the latter would, but for the irregular short line, resemble the sestet of a common type of sonnet. In one stanza only—the fifth—no break in the sense occurs to mark the close of the quatrain.

The other great Odes represent variations of this model. The heroic quatrain at the beginning of each stanza and the introduction at rare intervals of a trimeter line are features common to several of them. In *To Psyche* the stanzas vary in length from 18 to 26 lines. In those which are most nearly regular—*To Indolence*, *On a Grecian Urn*, *To Autumn*, *On Melancholy*—slight divergencies from the normal stanza-type may be found: thus the second line of *To Indolence* lacks one foot, while in the other three the rhyme-scheme varies slightly.

Of extra syllables Keats is sparing; indeed, he often gives value to a syllable which most poets would slur, e.g.

Dread ó | penèr | of thè | mysté | rious doors.²

Here the first *e* in *opener* ranks as a distinct syllable,

¹ Even here there is one distinct irregularity: the last line of the second stanza is an Alexandrine. It is, however, doubtful whether the word *away* should not be omitted.

² This line has a second peculiarity in the substitution of a weak for a strong stress in two successive feet. An alternative scansion is—

Dread ó | penèr | óf the | mysté | rious doors.

whereas the more common practice is to slur a vowel that stands before *l*, *n*, or *r*. Again, in

Apóll | o síng | eth whíle | his chá | riòt

Wáits at | the dóors | of heáv | en. Thóu | art nó't

it would be more usual to make *chariot* a dissyllable and *heaven* a monosyllable, but Keats gives to each word its full value. Still more strangely, in the line

And for | that póor | Ambít | ion | it spríngs

Keats makes *ambition* a word of four syllables, as it might have been made by Shakespeare and other Elizabethans.

His rhymes are as a rule rich and pure. The sensitive may take exception to the coupling of *grass* with *farce*, *abroad* with *sod*, or *morn* with *return*; but it is certain that such rhymes¹ abound in the work of our best poets.

Keats makes frequent use of alliteration: a device which, when used with the tact of an artist, contributes in a remarkable degree to the harmony of verse; e.g. "marble men and maidens," "the winnowing wind," and

Fast fading violets covered up in leaves,

where the alliteration is varied between the kindred sounds *p*, *v*, and *f*, which a critic has called the finest trinity of consonantal harmonies our tongue contains.

Keats is famous for his onomatopœic lines—that is, lines in which the sound is deliberately designed to echo the meaning. Examples are:—

The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves,

where the effect is obtained chiefly by alliteration on *r*;

Until they think warm days will never cease,

For Summer has o'erbrimmed their clammy cells,

where an impression of drowsy richness is gained by the use of sibilant and liquid;

Thou watchest the last ooziings, hours by hours,

where the long slow vowel sounds produce an indescribable sense of languor and the slow passage of time.

¹ Except perhaps the first, *grass* and *farce*—a very ugly discord.

ODES

BY

JOHN KEATS.

1. ODE TO APOLLO.

In thy western halls of gold,
When thou sittest in thy state,
Bards, that erst sublimely told
Heroic deeds, and sang of fate,
With fervour seize their adamantyne lyres,
Whose chords are solid rays, and twinkle radiant
fires. 5

Here Homer with his nervous arms
Strikes the twanging harp of war,
And even the western splendour warms,
While the trumpets sound afar : 10
But, what creates the most intense surprise,
His soul looks out through renovated eyes.

Then, through thy Temple wide, melodious swells
The sweet majestic tone of Maro's lyre :
The soul delighted on each accent dwells,— 15
Enraptured dwells,—not daring to respire,
The while he tells of grief around a funeral pyre.

'Tis awful silence then again ;
Expectant stand the spheres ;
Breathless the laurell'd peers,
Nor move, till ends the lofty strain,
Nor move till Milton's tuneful thunders cease,
And leave once more the ravish'd heavens in
peace.

20

Thou biddest Shakspeare wave his hand,
And quickly forward spring
The Passions—a terrific band—
And each vibrates the string
That with its tyrant temper best accords,
While from their Master's lips pour forth the
inspiring words.

25

A silver trumpet Spenser blows,
And, as its martial notes to silence flee,
From a virgin chorus flows
A hymn in praise of spotless Chastity.
'Tis still ! Wild warblings from the Aeolian lyre
Enchantment softly breathe, and tremblingly
expire.

30

35

Next thy Tasso's ardent numbers
Float along the pleased air,
Calling youth from idle slumbers,
Rousing them from Pleasure's lair :—
Then o'er the strings his fingers gently move,
And melt the soul to pity and to love.

40

But when *Thou* joinest with the Nine,
 And all the powers of song combine,
 We listen here on earth :
 The dying tones that fill the air, 45
 And charm the ear of evening fair,
 From thee, great God of Bards, receive their heavenly
 birth.

2. HYMN TO APOLLO.

God of the golden bow,
 And of the golden lyre,
 And of the golden hair,
 And of the golden fire,
 Charioteer 5
 Round the patient year,
 Where—where slept thine ire,
 When like a blank idiot I put on thy wreath,
 Thy laurel, thy glory,
 The light of thy story, 10
 Or was I a worm—too low creeping for death?
 O Delphic Apollo!

The Thunderer grasp'd and grasp'd,
 The Thunderer frown'd and frown'd ;
 The eagle's feathery mane 15
 For wrath became stiffen'd—the sound
 Of breeding thunder
 Went drowsily under,
 Muttering to be unbound.

O why didst thou pity, and beg for a worm? 20
 Why touch thy soft lute
 Till the thunder was mute,
 Why was I not crush'd—such a pitiful germ?
 O Delphic Apollo!

The Pleiades were up, 25
 Watching the silent air;
 The seeds and roots in Earth
 Were swelling for summer fare;
 The Ocean, its neighbour,
 Was at his old labour, 30
 When, who—who did dare
 To tie for a moment thy plant round his brow,
 And grin and look proudly,
 And blaspheme so loudly,
 And live for that honour, to stoop to thee now? 35
 O Delphic Apollo!

3. TO PAN.

“O thou, whose mighty palace roof doth hang
 From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth
 Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death
 Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness;
 Who lovest to see the hamadryads dress 5
 Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels darken;
 And through whole solemn hours dost sit, and hearken
 The dreary melody of bedded reeds,
 In desolate places, where dank moisture breeds
 The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth— 10
 Bethinking thee, how melancholy loth
 Thou wast to lose fair Syrinx—do thou now,
 By thy love's milky brow!

By all the trembling mazes that she ran,
Hear us, great Pan!

15

“O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet, turtles
Passion their voices cooingly 'mong myrtles,
What time thou wanderest at eventide
Through sunny meadows, that outskirt the side
Of thine enmossed realms: O thou, to whom
Broad-leaved fig-trees even now foredoom
Their ripen'd fruitage; yellow-girted bees
Their golden honeycombs; our village leas
Their fairest-blossom'd beans and popped corn;
The chuckling linnet its five young unborn,
To sing for thee; low-creeping strawberries
Their summer coolness; pent-up butterflies
Their freckled wings; yea, the fresh-budding year
All its completions—be quickly near,
By every wind that nods the mountain pine,
O forester divine!

20

25

30

“Thou, to whom every faun and satyr flies
For willing service; whether to surprise
The squatted hare while in half-sleeping fit;
Or upward ragged precipices flit
To save poor lambkins from the eagle's maw;
Or by mysterious enticement draw
Bewilder'd shepherds to their path again;
Or to tread breathless round the frothy main,
And gather up all fancifullest shells
For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells,
And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeping;
Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping,
The while they pelt each other on the crown
With silvery oak-apples, and fir-cones brown—
By all the echoes that about thee ring,
Hear us, O satyr kin

35

40

45

“ O Harkener to the loud-clapping shears,
While ever and anon to his shorn peers
A ram goes bleating : Winder of the horn, 50
When snouted wild-boars routing tender corn
Anger our huntsmen : Breather round our farms,
To keep off mildews, and all weather harms :
Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds,
That come a-swooning ever hollow grounds, 55
And wither drearily on barren moors :
Dread opener of the mysterious doors
Leading to universal knowledge—see,
Great son of Dryope,
The many that are come to pay their vows 60
With leaves about their brows !

“ Be still the unimaginable lodge
For solitary thinkings ; such as dodge
Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
Then leave the naked brain : be still the leaven 65
That, spreading in this dull and clodded earth,
Gives it a touch ethereal—a new birth :
Be still a symbol of immensity ;
A firmament reflected in a sea ;
An element filling the space between ; 70
An unknown—but no more : we humbly screen
With uplift hands our foreheads, lowly bending,
And, giving out a shout most heaven-rending,
Conjure thee to receive our humble Pæan
Upon thy Mount Lycean ! ” 75

4. TO NEPTUNE.

" King of the stormy sea!
 Brother of Jove, and co-inheritor
 Of elements! Eternally before
 Thee the waves awful bow. Fast, stubborn rock,
 At thy fear'd trident shrinking, doth unlock 5
 Its deep foundations, hissing into foam.
 All mountain-rivers, lost in the wide home
 Of thy capacious bosom, ever flow.
 Thou frownest, and old Aeolus thy foe
 Skulks to his cavern, 'mid the gruff complaint 10
 Of all his rebel tempests. Dark clouds faint
 When, from thy diadem, a silver gleam
 Slants over blue dominion. Thy bright team
 Gulfs in the morning light, and scuds along
 To bring thee nearer to that golden song 15
 Apollo singeth, while his chariot
 Waits at the doors of heaven. Thou art not
 For scenes like this: an empire stern hast thou;
 And it hath furrow'd that large front: yet now,
 As newly come of heaven, dost thou sit 20
 To blend and interknit
 Subdued majesty with this glad time.
 O shell-borne King sublime!
 We lay our hearts before thee evermore—
 We sing, and we adore!

" Breathe softly, flutes; 25
 Be tender of your strings, ye soothing lutes;
 Nor be the trumpet heard! O vain, O vain!
 Not flowers budding in an April rain,
 Nor breath of sleeping dove, nor river's flow—
 No, nor the Aeolian twang of Love's own bow 30

Can mingle music fit for the soft ear
 Of goddess Cytherea !
 Yet deign, white Queen of Beauty, thy fair eyes
 On our souls' sacrifice.

" Bright-winged Child !

Who has another care when thou hast smiled ? 35
 Unfortunates on earth, we see at last
 All death-shadows, and glooms that overcast
 Our spirits, fann'd away by thy light pinions.
 O sweetest essence ! sweetest of all minions !
 God of warm pulses, and dishevell'd hair, 40
 And panting bosoms bare !
 Dear unseen light in darkness ! eclipser
 Of light in light ! delicious poisoner !
 Thy venom'd goblet will we quaff until
 We fill—we fill ! 45
 And by thy Mother's lips——"

5. TO SORROW.

O Sorrow !
 Why dost borrow
 The natural hue of health, from vermeil lips ?—
 To give maiden blushes
 To the white rose bushes ? 5
 Or is it thy dewy hand the daisy tips ?

O Sorrow !
 Why dost borrow
 The lustrous passion from a falcon-eye ?—
 To give the glow-worm light ? 10
 Or, on a moonless night,
 To tinge, on syren shores, the salt sea-spry ?

O Sorrow!
 Why dost borrow
 The mellow ditties from a mourning tongue?— 15
 To give at evening pale
 Unto the nightingale,
 That thou mayst listen the cold dew's among?

O Sorrow!
 Why dost borrow 20
 Heart's lightness from the merriment of May?
 A lover would not tread
 A cowslip on the head,
 Though he should dance from eve till peep of day—
 Nor any drooping flower 25
 Held sacred for thy bower,
 Wherever he may sport himself and play.

To Sorrow
 I bade good morrow,
 And thought to leave her far away behind. 30
 But cheerly, cheerly,
 She loves me dearly;
 She is so constant to me, and so kind:
 I would deceive her,
 And so leave her, 35
 But ah! she is so constant and so kind.

Beneath my palm-trees, by the river side,
 I sat a-weeping: in the whole world wide
 There was no one to ask me why I wept—
 And so I kept 40
 Brimming the water-lily cups with tears
 Cold as my fears.

Beneath my palm-trees, by the river side,
 I sat a-weeping: what enamour'd bride,

Cheated by shadowy wooer from the clouds, 45
But hides and shrouds
Beneath dark palm-trees by a river side?

And, as I sat, over the light blue hills
There came a noise of revellers : the rills
Into the wide stream came of purple hue— 50
'Twas Bacchus and his crew!

The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills
From kissing cymbals made a merry din—
'Twas Bacchus and his kin!

Like to a moving vintage down they came, 55
Crown'd with green leaves, and faces all on flame;
All madly dancing through the pleasant valley.

To scare thee, Melancholy!
O then, O then, thou wast a simple name!
And I forgot thee, as the berried holly 60
By shepherds is forgotten, when in June
Tall chestnuts keep away the sun and moon:—
I rush'd into the folly!

Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,
Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood, 65
With sidelong laughing;
And little rills of crimson wine imbrued
His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough white
For Venus' pearly bite;
And near him rode Silenus on his ass, 70
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass
Tipsily quaffing.

Whence came ye, merry Damsels! whence came ye,
So many, and so many, and such glee?
Why have ye left your bowers desolate 75
Your lutes, and gentler fate?

“ We follow Bacchus ! Bacchus on the wing,
A-conquering !
Bacchus, young Bacchus ! good or ill betide,
We dance before him thorough kingdoms wide :— 80
Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
To our wild minstrelsy ! ”

Whence came ye, jolly Satyrs ! whence came ye,
So many, and so many, and such glee ?
Why have ye left your forest haunts, why left 85
Your nuts in oak-tree cleft ?—

“ For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree ;
For wine we left our heath, and yellow brooms,
And cold mushrooms ;
For wine we follow Bacchus through the earth ; 90
Great god of breathless cups and chirping mirth !
Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
To our mad minstrelsy ! ”

Over wide streams and mountains great we went,
And, save when Bacchus kept his ivy tent, 95
Onward the tiger and the leopard pants,
With Asian elephants :
Onward these myriads—with song and dance,
With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians' prance,
Web-footed alligators, crocodiles, 100
Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,
lump infant laughers mimicking the coil
Of seamen, and stout galley-rowers' toil :
With toying oars and silken sails they glide,
Nor care for wind and tide. 105

Mounted on panthers' furs and lions' manes,
From rear to van they scour about the plains ;
A three days' journey in a moment done ;

And always, at the rising of the sun,
 About the wilds they hunt with spear and horn, 110
 On spleenful unicorn.

I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown
 Before the vine-wreath crown!
 I saw parch'd Abyssinia rouse and sing
 To the silver cymbals' ring! 115
 I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce
 Old Tartary the fierce!

The kings of Ind their jewel-sceptres vail,
 And from their treasures scatter pearled hail;
 Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans, 120
 And all his priesthood moans,
 Before young Bacchus' eye-wink turning pale.
 Into these regions came I, following him,
 Sick-hearted, weary—so I took a whim
 To stray away into these forests drear, 125
 Alone, without a peer:
 And I have told thee all thou mayest hear.

 Young stranger!
 I've been a ranger
 In search of pleasure throughout every clime; 130
 Alas! 'tis not for me:
 Bewitch'd I sure must be,
 To lose in grieving all my maiden prime.

 Come then, Sorrow,
 Sweetest Sorrow! 135
 Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast:
 I thought to leave thee,
 And deceive thee,
 But now of all the world I love thee best

There is not one, 140
 No, no, not one
 But thee to comfort a poor lonely maid;
 Thou art her mother,
 And her brother,
 Her playmate, and her wooer in the shade. 145

6. TO DIANA.

Who, who from Dian's feast would be away?
 For all the golden bowers of the day
 Are empty left? Who, who away would be
 From Cynthia's wedding and festivity?
 Not Hesperus: lo! upon his silver wings 5
 He leans away for highest heaven and sings,
 Snapping his lucid fingers merrily!—
 Ah, Zephyrus! art here, and Flora too?
 Ye tender bibbers of the rain and dew,
 Young playmates of the rose and daffodil, 10
 Be careful, ere ye enter in, to fill
 Your baskets high
 With fennel green, and balm, and golden pines,
 Savory, latter-mint, and columbines,
 Cool parsley, basil sweet, and sunny thyme; 15
 Yea, every flower and leaf of every clime,
 All gather'd in the dewy morning: hie
 Away! fly, fly!—
 Crystalline brother of the belt of heaven,
 Aquarius! to whom king Jove has given 20
 Two liquid pulse streams 'stead of feather'd wings,
 Two fanlike fountains,—thine illuminings
 For Dian play:
 Dissolve the frozen purity of air;
 Let thy white shoulders silvery and bare 25

Show cold through watery pinions; make more bright
The Star-Queen's crescent on her marriage night:

Haste, haste away!

Castor has tamed the planet Lion, see!
And of the Bear has Pollux mastery: 30
A third is in the race! who is the third,
Speeding away swift as the eagle bird?

The ramping Centaur!

The Lion's mane's on end: the Bear how fierce!
The Centaur's arrow ready seems to pierce 35
Some enemy: far forth his bow is bent
Into the blue of heaven. He'll be shent,

Pale unrelentor,

When he shall hear the wedding lutes a-playing.—
Andromeda! sweet woman! why delaying 40
So timidly among the stars: come hither!
Join this bright throng, and nimbly follow whither

They all are going.

Danae's Son, before Jove newly bow'd,
Has wept for thee, calling to Jove aloud. 45
Thee, gentle lady, did he disenthral:
Ye shall for ever live and love, for all

Thy tears are flowing.—

By Daphne's fright, behold Apollo!

7. ON A LOCK OF MILTON'S HAIR.

Chief of organic numbers!
Old Scholar of the Spheres!
Thy spirit never slumbers,
But rolls about our ears
For ever and for ever!
O what a mad endeavour

Worketh He,
 Who to thy sacred and ennobled hearse
 Would offer a burnt sacrifice of verse
 And melody !

10

How heavenward thou soundest !
 Live Temple of sweet noise,
 And Discord unconfoundest,
 Giving Delight new joys,
 And Pleasure nobler pinions :
 O where are thy dominions ?

15

Lend thine ear
 To a young Delian oath — ay, by thy soul,
 By all that from thy mortal lips did roll,
 And by the kernel of thine earthly love,
 Beauty, in things on earth and things above,
 I swear !

20

When every childish fashion
 Has vanished from my rhyme,
 Will I, grey gone in passion,
 Leave to an after-time
 Hymning and Harmony
 Of thee and of thy works, and of thy life ;
 But vain is now the burning and the strife ;
 Pangs are in vain, until I grow high-rife
 With old Philosophy,
 And mad with glimpses of futurity.

25

30

For many years my offerings must be hush'd ;
 When I do speak, I'll think upon this hour,
 Because I feel my forehead hot and flushed,
 Even at the simplest vassal of thy power,
 A lock of thy bright hair,—
 Sudden it came,

35

And I was startled when I caught thy name
 Coupled so unaware ;
 Yet at the moment temperate was my blood—
 I thought I had beheld it from the flood !

40

8. TO MAIA. (FRAGMENT.)

Mother of Hermes ! and still youthful Maia !
 May I sing to thee
 As thou wast hymned on the shores of Baiae ?
 Or may I woo thee
 In earlier Sicilian ? or thy smiles
 Seek as they once were sought, in Grecian isles,
 By bards who died content on pleasant sward,
 Leaving great verse unto a little clan ?
 O, give me their old vigour, and unheard
 Save of the quiet primrose, and the span
 Of heaven, and few ears,
 Rounded by thee, my song should die away
 Content as theirs,
 Rich in the simple worship of a day.

5

10

9. ON INDOLENCE.

“They toil not, neither do they spin.”

I.

One morn before me were three figures seen,
 With bowed necks, and joined hands, side-faccd ;
 And one behind the other stepp'd serene,
 In placid sandals, and in white robes graced ;
 They pass'd, like figures on a marble urn,
 When shifted round, to see the other side ;

5

They came again ; as, when the urn once more
 Is shifted round, the first seen shades return ;
 And they were strange to me, as may betide
 With vases, to one deep in Phidian lore.

10

II.

How is it, Shadows ! that I knew ye not ?
 How came ye muffled in so hush a mask ?
 Was it a silent deep-disguised plot
 To steal away, and leave without a task
 My idle days ? Ripe was the drowsy hour ;
 The blissful cloud of summer-indolence
 Benumb'd my eyes ; my pulse grew less and less ;
 Pain had no sting, and pleasure's wreath no flower :
 O, why did ye not melt, and leave my sense
 Unhaunted quite of all but —nothingness ?

15

20

III.

A third time pass'd they by, and, passing, turn'd
 Each one the face a moment whiles to me ;
 Then faded, and to follow them I burn'd
 And ached for wings, because I knew the three ;
 The first was a fair Maid, and Love her name ;
 The second was Ambition, pale of cheek,
 And ever watchful with fatigued eye ;
 The last, whom I love more, the more of blame
 Is heap'd upon her, maiden most unmeek, —
 I knew to be my demon Poesy.

25

30

IV.

They faded, and, forsooth ! I wanted wings :
 O folly ! What is love ? and where is it ?
 And for that poor Ambition ! it springs

From a man's little heart's short fever-fit;
 For Poesy!—no,—she has not a joy,— 35
 At least for me,—so sweet as drowsy noons,
 And evenings steep'd in honied indolence;
 O, for an age so shelter'd from annoy,
 That I may never know how change the moons,
 Or hear the voice of busy common-sense! 40

V.

And once more came they by;—alas! wherefore?
 My sleep had been embroider'd with dim dreams;
 My soul had been a lawn besprinkled o'er
 With flowers, and stirring shades, and baffled beams:
 The morn was clouded, but no shower fell, 45
 Tho' in her lids hung the sweet tears of May;
 The open casement press'd a new-leaved vine,
 Let in the budding warmth and throstle's lay;
 O Shadows! 'twas a time to bid farewell!
 Upon your skirts had fallen no tears of mine. 50

VI.

So, ye three Ghosts, adieu! Ye cannot raise
 My head cool-bedded in the flowery grass;
 For I would not be dieted with praise,
 A pet-lamb in a sentimental farce!
 Fade softly from my eyes, and be once more 55
 In masque-like figures on the dreamy urn;
 Farewell! I yet have visions for the night,
 And for the day faint visions there is store;
 Vanish, ye Phantoms! from my idle spright,
 Into the clouds, and never more return! 60

10. ON THE MERMAID TAVERN.

Souls of poets dead and gone,
 What Elysium have ye known,
 Happy field or mossy cavern,
 Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?
 Have ye tippled drink more fine 5
 Than mine host's Canary wine?
 Or are fruits of Paradise
 Sweeter than those dainty pies
 Of venison? O generous food!
 Drest as though bold Robin Hood 10
 Would, with his maid Marian,
 Sup and bowse from horn and can.

I have heard that on a day
 Mine host's sign-board flew away,
 Nobody knew whither, till 15
 An astrologer's old quill
 To a sheepskin gave the story,—
 Said he saw you in your glory,
 Underneath a new-old sign
 Sipping beverage divine, 20
 And pledging with contented smack
 The Mermaid in the Zodiac.

Souls of poets dead and gone,
 What Elysium have ye known,
 Happy field or mossy cavern,
 Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern? 25

11. TO FANNY.

Physician Nature! let my spirit blood!
 O ease my heart of verse and let me rest;

Throw me upon thy Tripod, till the flood
Of stifling numbers ebbs from my full breast.
A theme! a theme! great nature! give a theme;

5

Let me begin my dream.

I come—I see thee, as thou standest there.
Beckon me not into the wintry air.

Ah! dearest love, sweet home of all my fears,
And hopes, and joys, and panting miseries,—
To-night, if I may guess, thy beauty wears
A smile of such delight,

10

As brilliant and as bright,
As when with ravish'd, aching, vassal eyes,
Lost in soft amaze,
I gaze, I gaze!

15

Who now, with greedy looks, eats up my feast?
What stare outfaces now my silver moon?
Ah! keep that hand unravish'd at the least;

Let, let, the amorous burn—

20

But, pr'ythee, do not turn
The current of your heart from me so soon.
O! save, in charity,
The quickest pulse for me.

Save it for me, sweet love! though music breathe
Voluptuous visions into the warm air,
Though swimming through the dance's dangerous wreath;

25

Be like an April day,
Smiling and cold and gay,
A temperate lily, temperate as fair;
Then, Heaven! there will be
A warmer June for me.

30

Why, this—you'll say, my Fanny! is not true:
Put your soft hand upon your snowy side,

Where the heart beats: confess—'tis nothing new— 35

Must not a woman be

A feather on the sea,

Sway'd to and fro by every wind and tide?

Of as uncertain speed

As blow-ball from the mead?

40

I know it—and to know it is despair

To one who loves you as I love, sweet Fanny!

Whose heart goes flutt'ring for you everywhere,

Nor, when away you roam,

Dare keep its wretched home.

45

Love, love alone, has pains severe and many:

Then, loveliest! keep me free,

From torturing jealousy.

Ah! if you prize my subdued soul above

The poor, the fading, brief pride of an hour;

50

Let none profane my Holy See of love,

Or with a rude hand break

The sacramental cake:

Let none else touch the just new-budded flower;

If not—may my eyes close,

Love! on their last repose.

55

12. TO FANCY.

Ever let the Fancy roam,

Pleasure never is at home:

At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth,

Like to bubbles when rain pelteth;

Then let winged Fancy wander

Through the thought still spread beyond her:

5

Open wide the mind's cage door,

She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar.
O sweet Fancy ! let her loose ;
Summer's joys are spoilt by use, 10
And the enjoying of the Spring
Fades as does its blossoming :
Autumn's red-lipp'd fruitage too,
Blushing through the mist and dew,
Cloys with tasting : What do then ? 15
Sit thee by the ingle, when
The sear faggot blazes bright,
Spirit of a winter's night ;
When the soundless earth is muffled,
And the caked snow is shuffled 20
From the ploughboy's heavy shoon ;
When the Night doth meet the Noon
In a dark conspiracy
To banish Even from her sky.
Sit thee there, and send abroad, 25
With a mind self-overawed,
Fancy, high-commission'd :—send her !
She has vassals to attend her :
She will bring, in spite of frost,
Beauties that the earth hath lost ; 30
She will bring thee, all together,
All delights of summer weather ;
All the buds and bells of May,
From dewy sward or thorny spray ;
All the heaped Autumn's wealth, 35
With a still, mysterious stealth :
She will mix these pleasures up
Like three fit wines in a cup,
And thou shalt quaff it :—thou shalt hear
Distant harvest-carols clear ; 40
Rustle of the reaped corn ;
Sweet birds antheming the morn :

And, in the same moment—hark !
'Tis the early April lark,
Or the rooks, with busy caw, 45
Foraging for sticks and straw.
Thou shalt, at one glance, behold
The daisy and the marigold ;
White-plumed lilies, and the first
Hedge-grown primrose that hath burst ; 50
Shaded hyacinth, alway
Sapphire queen of the mid-May ;
And every leaf, and every flower
Pearled with the self-same shower.
Thou shalt see the field-mouse peep 55
Meagre from its celled sleep ;
And the snake all winter-thin
Cast on sunny bank its skin !
Freckled nest eggs thou shalt see
Hatching in the hawthorn-tree, 60
When the hen-bird's wing doth rest
Quiet on her mossy nest ;
Then the hurry and alarm
When the bee-hive casts its swarm ;
Acorns ripe down-pattering 65
While the autumn breezes sing.

Oh, sweet Fancy ! let her loose ;
Every thing is spoilt by use :
Where's the cheek that doth not fade,
Too much gazed at ? Where's the maid 70
Whose lip mature is ever new ?
Where's the eye, however blue,
Doth not weary ? Where's the face
One would meet in every place ?
Where's the voice, however soft, 75

One would hear so very oft?
 At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth
 Like to bubbles when rain pelteth.
 Let, then, winged Fancy find
 Thee a mistress to thy mind : 80
 Dulcet-eyed as Ceres' daughter,
 Ere the God of Torment taught her
 How to frown and how to chide;
 With a waist and with a side
 White as Hebe's, when her zone 85
 Slipt its golden clasp, and down
 Fell her kirtle to her feet,
 While she held the goblet sweet,
 And Jove grew languid.—Break the mesh
 Of the Fancy's silken leash ; 90
 Quickly break her prison-string,
 And such joys as these she'll bring.—
 Let the winged Fancy roam,
 Pleasure never is at home.

13. "BARDS OF PASSION."

Bards of Passion and of Mirth,
 Ye have left your souls on earth!
 Have ye souls in heaven too,
 Double-lived in regions new?
 Yes, and those of heaven commune 5
 With the spheres of sun and moon;
 With the noise of fountains wondrous,
 And the parle of voices thund'rous;
 With the whisper of heaven's trees
 And one another, in soft ease 10

Seated on Elysian lawns
 Browsed by none but Dian's fawns;
 Underneath large blue-bells tented,
 Where the daisies are rose-scented,
 And the rose herself has got
 Perfume which on earth is not;
 Where the nightingale doth sing
 Not a senseless, tranced thing,
 But divine melodious truth;
 Philosophic numbers smooth;
 Tales and golden histories
 Of heaven and its mysteries.

15

20

Thus ye live on high, and then
 On the earth ye live again;
 And the souls ye left behind you
 Teach us, here, the way to find you,
 Where your other souls are joying,
 Never slumber'd, never cloying.
 Here, your earth-born souls still speak
 To mortals, of their little week;
 Of their sorrows and delights;
 Of their passions and their spites;
 Of their glory and their shame;
 What doth strengthen and what maim.
 Thus ye teach us, every day,
 Wisdom, though fled far away.

25

30

35

Bards of Passion and of Mirth,
 Ye have left your souls on earth!
 Ye have souls in heaven too,
 Double-lived in regions new!

40

14. TO A NIGHTINGALE.

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk :
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot, 5
But being too happy in thy happiness,—
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease. 10

O for a draught of vintage, that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sun-burnt mirth !
O for a beaker full of the warm South, 15
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth ;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim : 20

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan ;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs, 25
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies ;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs ;
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow. 30

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night, 35
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy
ways. 40

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild; 45
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast-fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves. 50

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die, 55
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod. 60

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
 No hungry generations tread thee down;
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard
 In ancient days by emperor and clown:
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path 65
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
 The same that oft-times hath
 Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
 Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn. 70

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
 To toll me back from thee to my sole self.
 Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
 As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.
 Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades 75
 Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
 Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
 In the next valley-glades:
 Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
 Fled is that music:—do I wake or sleep? 80

15. ON A GRECIAN URN.

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness!
 Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time,
 Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
 A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
 What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape 5
 Of deities or mortals, or of both,
 In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
 What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
 What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
 What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy? 10

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter ; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on ;
 Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
 Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone :
 Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave 15
 Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare ;
 Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
 Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve ;
 She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
 For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair ! 20

Ah, happy, happy boughs ! that cannot shed
 Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu ;
 And, happy melodist, unwearied,
 For ever piping songs for ever new ;
 More happy love ! more happy, happy love ! 25
 For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
 For ever panting and for ever young ;
 All breathing human passion far above,
 That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
 A burning forehead, and a parching tongue. 30

Who are these coming to the sacrifice ?
 To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
 Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
 And all her silken flanks with garlands drest ?
 What little town by river or sea-shore, 35
 Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
 Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn ?
 And, little town, thy streets for evermore
 Will silent be ; and not a soul to tell
 Why thou art desolate, can e'er return. 40

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
 Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
 With forest branches and the trodden weed;
 Thou, silent form! dost tease us out of thought
 As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral! 45
 When old age shall this generation waste,
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
 Beauty is truth, truth beauty.—That is all
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know. 50

16. TO PSYCHE.

O Goddess! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung
 By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,
 And pardon that thy secrets should be sung,
 Even into thine own soft-conched ear:
 Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see 5
 The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes?
 I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,
 And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,
 Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side
 In deepest grass, beneath the whispering roof 10
 Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran
 A brooklet, scarce espied:
 'Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers fragrant-eyed,
 Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,
 They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass, 15
 Their arms embraced, and their pinions too;
 Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,
 As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,
 And ready still past kisses to outnumber
 At tender eye-dawn of aurorean love: 20

The winged boy I knew ;
 But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove ?
 His Psyche true !

O latest-born and loveliest vision far
 Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy ! 25
 Fairer than Phoebe's sapphire-region'd star,
 Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky ;
 Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none.
 Nor altar heap'd with flowers ;
 Nor Virgin-choir to make delicious moan 30
 Upon the midnight hours ;
 No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet
 From chain-swung censer teeming ;
 No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
 Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming. 35
 O brightest ! though too late for antique vows,
 Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,
 When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
 Holy the air, the water, and the fire ;
 Yet even in these days so far retired 40
 From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,
 Fluttering among the faint Olympians,
 I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired.
 So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
 Upon the midnight hours ! 45
 Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
 From swung censer teeming :
 Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
 Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.
 Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane 50
 In some untrodden region of my mind,
 Where branched thoughts, new-grown with pleasant
 pain,

Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind :
 Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees
 Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep ; 55
 And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,
 The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep ;
 And in the midst of this wide quietness
 A rosy sanctuary will I dress
 With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain, 60
 With buds, and bells, and stars without a name.
 With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
 Who, breeding flowers, will never breed the same :
 And there shall be for thee all soft delight
 That shadowy thought can win, 65
 A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
 To let the warm Love in !

17. TO AUTUMN.

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness !
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun ;
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run ;
 To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees 5
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core ;
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
 With a sweet kernel ; to set budding more,
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,
 Until they think warm days will never cease, 10
 For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store ?
 Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
 Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,

Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind ; 15
 Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
 Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
 Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers ;
 And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
 Steady thy laden head across a brook ; 20
 Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
 Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring ? Ay, where are they ?
 Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,
 While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day, 25
 And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue ;
 Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
 Among the river salallows, borne aloft
 Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies ;
 And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn ; 30
 Hedge-cricket sing ; and now with treble soft
 The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft,
 And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

18. ON MELANCHOLY.

No, no ! go not to Lethe, neither twist
 Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine ;
 Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd
 By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine ;
 Make not your rosary of yew-berries, 5
 Nor let the beetle nor the death-moth be
 Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
 A partner in your sorrow's mysteries ;
 For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
 And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul. 10

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud ;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose, 15
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
Or on the wealth of globed peonies ;
Or, if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes. 20

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die ;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu ; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips :
Ay, in the very temple of Delight 25
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous
tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine ;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung. 30

NOTES.

1, 2. ODE TO APOLLO. HYMN TO APOLLO.

These Odes belong to the earliest period of Keats' work, and are valuable chiefly as revealing, by contrast with his mature work, the extraordinarily rapid and powerful development of his genius. They were written when he was about twenty years old, or earlier, and show the influence of the eighteenth century.

They betray imitation of Dryden and Gray in their numerous classical allusions and in the use of stilted "poetic diction" and unreal "conceits."

Almost the only indication of Keats' genius is to be found in the management of the metre of the *Hymn to Apollo*. The *Ode to Apollo* is metrically a weak imitation of Dryden or Gray, but the irregular anapaestic beat of the *Hymn to Apollo* is a measure not often essayed by English poets, and Keats handles it with considerable daring and freedom, attaining in parts a real and rich music.

1. ODE TO APOLLO.

Keats represents Apollo as listening while the great poets of Greece, Italy, and England in turn strike the lyre of poetry. Apollo himself, however, surpasses them all in the beauty of his music.

Apollo was the god of light. He presided over music, and hence over poetry, which was at first chanted or recited to a musical accompaniment.

1. *western halls of gold*: the scene of this Ode is laid apparently in the Islands of the Blessed, which, according to classical mythology, were far away in the western seas. But there is also an allusion to Apollo's dwelling in the sunset: thus in *Hyperion* Keats represents the sun-god Hyperion, the predecessor of Apollo, as

living "on the threshold of the west," where, when the god was vexed,

his palace bright
 Bastioned with pyramids of glowing gold,
 And touch'd with shade of bronzed obelisks,
 Glared a blood-red through all its thousand courts,
 Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries;
 And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
 Flush'd angrily.

5. **adamantine**: early poetry was intended to be sung to the lyre, a frail instrument easily broken. Keats says that the dead bards use adamantine lyres, i.e. lyres so strong that they cannot be broken, as a sign that their songs too are imperishable.

7. **Homer**: the first three poets named are the three great epic poets of the world, as Keats apparently conceives them: Homer, Virgil, and Milton. It is not easy to see why Dante should be omitted. Homer strikes the harp of war because his *Iliad* is an epic of the Trojan War.

nervous: "sinewy, powerful," a metaphorical term that expresses the warlike spirit of his genius.

9. **the western splendour warms**: cp the quotation from *Hyperion* above. As the sun palace of Hyperion glows fiery red when the god is angry, so does Apollo's when the war chant of Homer is heard.

11. **what creates . . . surprise**: this line is remarkable for its weakness. "Creates surprise" is slipshod English.

12. **renovated eyes**: Homer while on earth was blind, but his sight is restored to him after death.

14. **Maro**: Publius Vergilius Maro (70-20 B.C.), whose *Aeneid* is the great epic poem of Roman literature.

16. **respire**: "breathe," a stilted word.

17. **a funeral pyre**: the allusion is probably to Dido, queen of Carthage, who hospitably entertained Aeneas and fell in love with him. When he deserted her she caused a great funeral pyre to be built on the pretext of offering a sacrifice, and slew herself upon it.

19. **spheres**: "the heavens," a reference to the Ptolemaic system of astronomy; see note on 13. 6.

20. **laurell'd peers**: the phrase is vaguely reminiscent of Milton's manner and the "infernal peers" of *Paradise Lost*. The laurel with which the bards are crowned was *laurus nobilis*, the bay tree, which was sacred to Apollo and grew around his sanctuary at Delphi.

24. **wave his hand**: not in farewell, but as a summons.

26. **the Passions**: the description of "the Passions" is obviously imitated from Collins' great ode of that name (1747), in which each of the Passions plays in turn upon the lyre of "Music, heavenly maid."

30. **silver**: the note of the silver trumpet is peculiarly sweet and pure. Cf. *St. Agnes' Eve*, stanza 4: "The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide." Spenser is famous for his exquisite harmonies in

verse, which Keats throughout this stanza attempts to imitate, but with no real success.

33. **Chastity** : Spenser's *Faerie Queen* (1590-96) is one long glorification of the favourite Elizabethan virtue of chastity as personified in Britomartis, Una, and the Faerie Queen Gloriana herself.

34. **Aeolian lyre** : this should refer to lyric poetry alone, for the allusion is properly to the lyric verse of Sappho and Alcaeus, both of whom were born in Aeolis or Aeolia, and used the Aeolic dialect. After the first three books of the *Faerie Queen* had been published Spenser returned to lyric poetry, producing, among other verse, his *Epithalamion* and *Prothalamion* and the *Hymns to Love and Beauty*.

36. **Tasso** : a great Italian poet, author of the *Jerusalem Delivered* (1581). His verses are called ardent because they deal with the First Crusade, a theme of high devotion and gallantry. At the close of the stanza Keats recalls the love stories of Erminia and Tancred and of Rinaldo and Armida, which Tasso introduces to lighten his heroic subject.

41. **melt the soul to pity and to love** : cp. Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*, "Pity melts the mind to love."

42. **Thou** : i.e. Apollo. The Nine are the Nine Muses.

2. HYMN TO APOLLO.

In this Ode Keats expresses his penitence for some act of presumption of which he has been guilty. The allusion seems to be to the fact, chronicled in another early poem—the Sonnet *To a Young Lady who sent me a Laurel Crown*—that Keats had dared to place an actual wreath of laurel on his own forehead, i.e. to claim for himself the rank of a poet.

1-6. **Apollo** is in turn invoked as the archer-god, as god of music, as long-haired and unshorn, as the sun-god, and as driving the chariot of the sun.

8. **blank** : "unreflecting," "thoughtless."

11. **too low . . . death** : "too insignificant for punishment," i.e. beneath thy notice.

12. **Delphic** : Apollo was worshipped in his temple at Delphi, in Northern Greece, where was his oracle.

13. **Thunderer** : Jove is represented as grasping his thunderbolt in readiness to punish the young poet for his daring, and Apollo as interceding in Keats' favour.

15. **eagle** : the eagle was sacred to Jove, and one of these birds sat perched on Jove's sceptre.

25. **Pleiades** : this constellation "rises" (i.e. comes into view) at the beginning of May.

3-6. ODES TO PAN, NEPTUNE, SORROW, AND DIANA.

These four Odes occur respectively in Books I., III., IV., and IV. of *Endymion*, and with them we pass into a far different stage of Keats' art. It is as yet immature and his early defects are still prominent, but despite these there is in all these Odes a power, a richness of poetry, which no isolated faults can counterbalance.

Endymion is a long "poetic romance" in heroic couplets, telling of the loves of Endymion, a shepherd-prince who lives on Mount Latmos in Greece, and the moon-goddess Diana. Taken with the beauty of Endymion, the goddess comes to earth to visit him, but does not reveal her name and appears only in fleeting visions. The poem opens with a great feast to Pan, at which Endymion is present as prince and chief among the shepherds of Latmos. The *Ode to Pan* is the song chanted on this occasion by the comrades of the "young Endymion" while the priest offers the sacrifice to Pan. Endymion meanwhile, overcome by love and perplexed wistfulness, faints, and is led away by his sister Peona, to whom he tells the story of his unknown visitant.

In the next Book he goes on a "fairy journey" in quest of his lady, and after wandering through many strange adventures suddenly

The visions of the earth were gone and fled—
He saw the giant sea above his head.

In Book III. he rescues Glaucus and Scylla from the enchantments of Circe, and many other lovers who lie drowned in the depths of the sea are raised to life by his means. All these then repair together with Endymion to Neptune's palace, where the *Hymn to Neptune* (4) is sung by them in chorus.

In Book IV. Endymion returns to the upper world, where he meets a young Indian maiden who lures him away from his quest of Diana. The *Ode to Sorrow* (5) is the song which she sings to him on their first meeting, to tell the story of her life. Henceforward till the end of the poem Endymion is torn in twain between love of the mortal woman and love of the goddess. Finally he makes up his mind to renounce the Indian maiden and follow only his higher quest; when, just as he is saying farewell to his earthly love, she is transformed into the golden-haired Diana, and he realises that the two loves are one and the same. Unheard by Endymion, the *Hymn to Diana* is sung midway through Book IV. by all the friendly gods

and spirits of earth and air and sea in honour of his marriage with Diana.

A thread of allegory runs through the whole tale, Diana standing apparently for spiritual love and the Indian maid for sensuous love, while the episode of Glaucus and Scylla represents unselfish work for others. Only through the latter can true love be attained at all, while the merely sensuous passion must be renounced before the highest passion, which is at once sensuous and spiritual, can be gained. Such appears to be the most consistent interpretation, and the one that accords best with what we know of Keats' view of life.

The tale of Endymion was first sung by Sappho in a poem now lost. Various later writers—Theocritus, Ovid, and others—allude to the myth, but it does not appear that Keats owes them more than a general debt.

The theme, however, had been handled several times by Englishmen of the Elizabethan age, in whose work Keats was deeply read, and to these he owes probably a few touches. He must have known Lyly's comedy of *Endymion* (c. 1585), which had been edited not long before by Keats' friend Dilke: this, however, is a "topical" play in prose, in which Endymion and Diana figure forth the Earl of Leicester and Queen Elizabeth—a conception widely removed from that of Keats.

Drayton's *Man in the Moon*, a short tale in heroic couplets, and Fletcher's lovely pastoral play, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, may both have had some influence. From the former Keats probably took the idea of making his poem open with the Feast of Pan. Another possible influence is Sandys' old version of Ovid, in which the Roman poet came to Keats in a rich Elizabethan dress.

Of these four poems the *Hymn to Pan* is perhaps the most beautiful. Sung by the Latmian shepherds, it is at once a thanksgiving for the bounties of a fruitful spring and a prayer to the god to continue his favours. Pan was the Greek god of shepherds and of everything connected with pastoral life. He is here addressed as the lover of Syrinx (stanza 1), as caring for birds and insects, fruits and flowers (stanza 2), and as caring for animals, and for the mythical folk of the woods and waters, fauns, satyrs, and naiads (stanzas 3 and 4); while in the last stanza the thought becomes mystical, Pan being regarded as the fountain-head of solitary musings, such as come to those who wander alone in lonely places.

Keats recited this poem to Wordsworth at the house of Haydon in 1817, when Wordsworth's slighting comment was "A very pretty

piece of paganism." Yet there is a notable likeness between the attitude of Keats towards the pagan gods and that of Wordsworth in his beautiful sonnet "The world is too much with us."

3. TO PAN.

1. **palace roof**: Pan's dwelling was in the woods. The likeness of a great forest to a palace or cathedral, of which the pillars are formed by tree trunks, has often been noted in poetry.

5. **hamadryads**: tree-nymphs, who died when their trees died. They would of course be under Pan's protection.

10. **pipy**: one of Keats' coinages; the allusion is to the water-hemlock which grew by the rivers in Greece, and the hollow stems of which were used as pipes to play on. Keats has many similar adjectives in -y, either self-coined or taken from Elizabethan writers.

11. **melancholy loth**: "sorrowfully unwilling."

12. **Syrinx**: an Arcadian nymph beloved by Pan; she fled into the river Ladon to escape him and was turned into a reed, which Pan then used as a flute. Keats had already touched upon this theme in "I stood tiptoe," one of the loveliest among the "Poems" published in 1817.

14. **trembling mazes**: one of Keats' close-packed, felicitous phrases. The trembling nymph runs by devious paths to escape Pan.

16. **turtles**: "turtle-doves."

17. **passion their voices**: this is one of the phrases singled out by the reviewer in the *Quarterly* as a tasteless innovation. In reality the verb "to passion" is found in Shakespeare (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, IV. iv. 172-3: "'twas Ariadne passioning For Theseus' perjury and unjust flight," and elsewhere) and Spenser (*The Faerie Queen*, II. ix. 41: "Great wonder had the knight to see the maid So strangely passioned"). Keats is, however, the first to use it as a transitive verb.

19. **outskirt**: "border."

21. **foredoom**: "devote beforehand for a sacrifice."

22. **yellow-girted**: "girdled with a yellow band."

27. **pent-up**: as the young of the linnet are devoted while still unborn, so the butterfly while still a chrysalis consecrates itself to Pan. Note throughout this Ode the many compound words, "fairest-blossom'd," "low-creeping," "pent-up," and many more. This trick came to Keats from the Elizabethans, among whom Shakespeare is renowned for the frequency and felicity of such coinages.

32. **faun**: a horned denizen of the woods, half man, half goat. **satyr**: other woodland beings, often confused with the fauns. The satyrs were horned and hairy, and had pointed ears. They were

connected with the worship of Bacchus, and were lovers of wine and all sensual pleasures.

34. **fit**: in prose one would still speak of a fit of passion or mirth, but not, as here, of a fit of sleep.

41. **Naiads**: nymphs of fresh-water brooks, lakes, and springs. From the allusion to the "frothy main" and "shells" it seems that Keats confused them with the Nereids, nymphs of the sea.

48. **Hearkener . . . bleating**: Pan was peculiarly the god of shepherds, though all rural or woodland operations came within his ken.

53. **mildews . . . harms**: every form of blight, and unseasonable frost, rain, or sun.

54. **ministrant . . . sounds**: Pan was often to be heard playing on his pipe or flute. The sound was dreaded by travellers, who were struck by sudden fear, called "panic fear."

55. **a-swooning**: swooning is one of Keats' favourite words. Here it means dimly, faintly, in low indistinguishable tones.

57. **dread opener . . . knowledge**: here we pass to the more mystical view of Pan. In this and the next stanza the thought depends partly on the literal meaning of the god's name—*τὸ Πᾶν*, the All, the Universal.

59. **Dryope**: Keats regards Pan as the son of Mercury and Dryope. This account of his birth is derived from the *Hymn to Pan* (once attributed to Homer, but certainly of later date), which Keats knew in Chapman's translation.

62. **be still . . . naked brain**: the thought here is deep, and Keats' command of words is not mature enough to express it plainly. Writing to his brothers in 1817, he said that after a discussion with a friend "it struck me what quality went to form a man of achievement, especially in literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." It is of these uncertainties and mysteries, these thoughts that go deeper than pure reason can follow, these "obstinate questionings of sense and outward things," that he considers Pan to be the inspiring deity. **Bourne** means "boundary."

65. **leaven**: Pan's spirit works in the world as yeast in bread, moving men's imaginations to wonder and novel ideas.

68. **symbol of immensity**: see note on line 57.

69. **firmament reflected in a sea**: in the Egyptian worship of Pan the god wore on his breast a star which was the symbol of the heavenly firmament, while his hairy legs and feet denoted the earth with its woods and plants. He was the principle of all things and the emblem of fecundity.

74. **conjure**: "call upon." **Paeon**: literally "the healer," a title given to Apollo, then a hymn sung to Apollo, and later used of any choric address to a god.

75. **Mount Lycean**: Mount Lycaeus in Arcadia, where Pan had an oracle.

4. TO NEPTUNE.

For the circumstances in which this Ode is sung see the Introduction on p. 70. It is usually called the Ode to Neptune, but in fact only the first stanza is addressed to Neptune, who is honoured as god of the sea by the company of drowned lovers whom Endymion has brought back to life; in the other two stanzas are invoked Venus as the goddess of love and Cupid her son.

2. **brother . . . elements**: Jove, Neptune, and Pluto were the sons of Saturn. They divided his inheritance between them, Jove becoming king of heaven and earth and ruler of the gods, while Neptune became king of the sea and Pluto of the underworld.

5. **trident**: the three-pronged sceptre carried by Neptune, and used by him to produce earthquakes.

9. **Aeolus**: the god of storm and wind. Keats is probably thinking of the scene in the First Book of Vergil's *Aeneid*, in which a violent storm is lulled by the appearance of Neptune. As soon as he appears above the waves, the winds retreat to the cave from which they have been summoned.

12. **silver gleam**: Neptune is conceived as wearing a silver crown of sunlight.

13. **blue dominion**: the "blue realm" of the sea.

14. **gulfs**: apparently used in the sense of "rushes along through the sea." Neptune drives his car not over the tops of the waves, but through the troughs or hollow gulfs between them. Hicckeringill (1580) uses "gulf'd into" in the sense of "rushed into."

18. **scenes like this**: i.e. scenes of calm and rejoicing. The sea more often parts lovers than re-unites them.

19. **large front**: "broad brow." **yet now . . . glad time**: "yet now, as a god newly descended from heaven, thou art come to add solemnity to our joy."

23. **shell-borne**: Neptune was often represented as riding in a sea-shell for chariot.

30. **Aeolian twang**: music as soft as that made by an Aeolian harp, a peculiar form of instrument which was hung up out of doors and played on by the winds. It consisted of a number of catgut strings, tuned in unison, and stretched on a frame resembling a box open at the sides.

32. **Cytherea**: an epithet of Venus, from Cythera, an island sacred to the goddess, who rose from the sea near its coasts.

34. **Child**: Cupid, the son of Venus.

36. **unfortunates on earth**: because their loves were cut short by untimely death.

39. **essence**: Milton's use of this word in *Paradise Lost* may account for its presence here. **minions**: "darlings," Fr. *mignon*, also an Elizabethan word.

42. **unseen light in darkness** : an allusion to the myth of Cupid and Psyche ; see *Introd. to the Ode To Psyche*, p. 98. Keats had already handled this fable very beautifully in "I stood tiptoe," lines 141-150. **eclipser** : the accent falls metrically on the weak final syllable ; a trick of Keats at this time, perhaps due to Chapman's influence.

46. **thy Mother's lips** : the song breaks off as the gate of Neptune's palace opens again to admit fresh guests.

5. TO SORROW.

For the circumstances in which this Ode is sung see p. 70. It must be borne in mind that the singer is neither the poet nor Endymion, but the "Indian maiden" who represents Endymion's earthly love.

In lines 1-36 Sorrow is directly addressed. Why does she take from her votaries health, bright eyes, the power of song, lightness of heart? In lines 37-127 the maiden describes her past life and adventures. Sitting alone under an Indian palm tree, she was roused from her sorrowful loneliness by the appearance of Bacchus and his crew of revellers, who called on her to follow. Joining their company, she passed through various lands, but at last grew weary of travelling and strayed away by herself into the woods where Endymion has found her.

In the closing stanzas she tells Endymion that she has given up her vain search for pleasure, and recognises that for her Sorrow is the only fit comrade.

The metrical harmonies of this Ode are rich and varied, the central passage being specially fine. There are reminiscences of both Milton and Coleridge, but the chief debt is really to a picture—the Bacchus and Ariadne of Titian in the National Gallery, a glowing scene, full of colour and strong sunshine, and crowded with figures in action.

2. **borrow** : "take away."

3. **vermeil** : "vermilion," "rose-red."

6. **is it . . . tips** : "is it thy dewy hand that paints the rosy tips on the daisy-petals?"

9. **falcon-eye** : the original draft read "lover's eye," which makes the sense clear—"bright eyes of a lover."

12. **syren shores** : sea-shores where sing the Syrens, sea-nymphs who lured sailors to destruction by their singing. **spry** : "spray" : the word is neither a caprice nor a vulgarism, but a genuine old form familiar to readers of Sandys, Defoe, and Smollett.

22. a lover . . . play : a reproach to Sorrow. Lovers do not deserve to be so harshly treated and robbed of their gaiety, for no true lover would injure any of the flowers that are symbolic of sorrow.

23. cowslip . . . for thy bower : the cowslip is selected as sacred to Sorrow probably because, unlike most common meadow flowers, it droops its bells. Critics have found here a reminiscence of Milton, *Comus*, 898 :—

Thus I set my printless feet
O'er the cowslip's velvet head
That bends not as I tread.

Keats seems to have been fond of cowslips, for he often alludes to them, e.g. "cowslip'd lawns" (*Lamia*, 6).

29. I : the Indian maiden.

37. river side : from *Endymion*, IV. 33, we learn that the river was the Ganges.

44. enamour'd bride : an allusion to the tales common in classical mythology of fair women who were wooed by gods in disguise and forsaken, or were distressed by the mysterious absences of their lovers.

46. shrouds : "conceals himself."

49. revellers : here begins the wonderful description of the passing of Bacchus with his attendant revellers. Keats probably took several details of the picture from Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary*, which in the 1804 edition thus describes the god : "Bacchus is the Osiris of the Egyptians. . . . As he was the god of vintage, of wine, and of drinkers, he is generally represented crowned with vine and ivy leaves, with a thyrsus in his hand. His figure is that of an effeminate young man, to denote the joys which commonly prevail at feasts. . . . Of all his achievements his expedition into the East is most celebrated. He marched, at the head of an army composed of men as well as of women, all inspired with divine fury, and armed with thyrsuses, cymbals, and other musical instruments. The leader was drawn in a chariot by a lion and a tiger, and was accompanied by Pan and Silenus, and all the Satyrs. His conquests were easy, and without bloodshed ; the people easily submitted, and gratefully elevated to the rank of a god the hero who taught them the use of the vine, the cultivation of the earth, and the manner of making honey."

In this and the following stanzas there are many allusions which seem to have been taken from this description : "cymbals" (53, 115), "ivy-dart" (65), and the whole picture of Bacchus in lines 64-69 ; "Silenus" (70), the "Damsels" (73), the "Satyrs" (83), "ivy tent" (95), "the tiger and the leopard" that draw the car of Bacchus (96), "Osirian Egypt" (112). Of course many of these details are the common property of poets, and are found in many classical and Elizabethan writers ; we know, however, that Keats studied Lemprière, and it seems likely that he made use of the passage cited.

50. **purple hue** : reddened by the crushing of the grapes.
52. **earnest** : "solemn."
53. **kissing cymbals** : because the pair of cymbals were clashed together.
60. **berried holly . . . moon** : i.e. as winter is forgotten in summer. There are not many words that rhyme with "melancholy."
65. **trifling his ivy-dart** : "playing with his ivy-twined staff."
67. **imbrued** : "moistened."
68. **enough white for Venus' pearly bite** : i.e. as white as Venus' teeth.
70. **Silenus** : a demi-god, usually represented as "a fat, jolly old man, riding on an ass, crowned with flowers, and always intoxicated" (Lemprière, 1804). He was the foster-father of Bacchus.
76. **gentler fate** : "pleasant and easy life at home."
80. **thorough** : "through." *Thorough* is really a later form than *through*, though it is now no longer used.
81. **lady fair** : the women of Bacchus' army called on the Indian maiden to join them.
83. **Satyrs** : see note on 4. 32.
87. **kernel tree** : i.e. a tree that bears nuts. In the first draft this read "forest meat." The Satyrs lived on nuts, mushrooms (89), and other produce of wood and field. From line 86 it would seem that Keats credited them with the tricks of squirrels, who hoard their gatherings.
88. **brooms** : the common broom that grows on dry soils, and bears yellow flowers.
91. **breathless cups** : "cups of wine which one tosses off at a draught, without taking breath." **chirping** : "merry," "cheering."
94. **we went** : the Indian maiden follows Bacchus.
96. **pants** : the exigencies of rhyme are responsible for the singular verb.
97. **Asian elephants** : Keats makes the rout of Bacchus ride upon all the strange beasts of distant lands.
99. **Arabians' prance** : "the prancing of the Arabian horses," a breed famous for their speed and spirit.
102. **coil** : "noise," "bustle."
103. **galley-rowers' . . . wind and tide** : the ships of the Egyptians, like the Roman triremes, were manned by oarsmen. The close of the stanza suggests a memory of *Antony and Cleopatra*, when Cleopatra goes to meet Antony in her barge with "silken tackle" and "purple sails" and oars of silver

Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
The water which they beat to follow faster,
As amorons of their strokes,

while "the winds were love-sick" (II. ii. 198). Worth noting in this connection is the drinking-song in the same play (II. vii. 120).

Come, thou monarch of the vine,
Plump Bacchus, with pink eyne.

It is hard to believe that Keats, knowing his Shakespeare well, could have written of Bacchus without recalling this wonderful verse, in spirit so close akin to his own description of the god.

106. on panthers' furs: i.e. on panthers, an animal sacred to Bacchus.

107. from rear to van: i.e. the procession keeps no fixed order.

112. Osirian Egypt: it has been well suggested that for this stanza Keats owes some debt to Milton's *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity* (1629). As Milton makes the gods of classic and Jewish mythology tremble and forsake their temples when Christ is born, so Keats makes the gods of Egypt and India and other Oriental countries quail before the coming of Bacchus. The allusion to Osiris recalls Milton's *Ode* (213),

Nor is Osiris seen
In Memphian grove or green,
Trampling the unshowered grass with lowings loud.

Osiris was a fabulous king of the Egyptians, afterwards deified, and adopted into Greek mythology under the name of Bacchus. In this and the following lines are named the countries visited by Bacchus in his Oriental expedition: Egypt, Abyssinia, Tartary, and India.

115. to the silver cymbals' ring: cp. the *Ode on the Nativity*, 208,

In vain, with cymbals' ring,
They call the grisly king.

116. the whelming vintage: "the conquering power of wine."

118. vail: "lower" (O.F. *avalier*, to let fall down), in homage to Bacchus.

119. pearled hail: "a hail of pearls"; the pearls of Ceylon are famous. Cp. *Isabella*, XV. 1,

For them the Ceylon diver held his breath,
And went all naked to the hungry shark.

120. Brahma: one of the chief personages of the Hindu faith, which is professed by some three-fourths of the population of India. He is "one of the three Beings whom God . . . created, and with whose assistance he formed the world." His worshippers "believed that there were seven seas, of water, curds, milk, butter, salt, sugar, and wine, each blessed with its particular paradise" (Lemprière, 1804).

123. these regions: where they are we learn neither from the *Ode* nor from the passage in which it occurs.

126. peer: here simply "companion."

127. thee . . . young stranger: i.e. Endymion.

6. TO DIANA.

For the circumstances of the Ode see p. 70. It must be remembered that Endymion himself does not hear the song, and is unaware, at the time when it is sung, of the happiness that is in store for him, for he is still divided between earthly love for his Indian maiden and spiritual love for Diana, and does not yet know that the two are one. He is sunk in deep unconsciousness:

Alas, no charm
Could lift Endymion's head, or he had viewed
A skiey masque, a pinion'd multitude,—
And silvery was its passing: voices sweet
Warbling the while.

The hymn sung by this band of spirits is a nuptial ode in honour of the approaching marriage of Endymion and Diana, and the singers are various mythological figures, including several of those who are identified with the signs of the Zodiac.

1. **Dian**: the moon-goddess. She was celebrated for her unspotted purity, and Milton calls her "Fair silver-shafted queen for ever chaste."

2. **for all . . . left**: these lines are printed in all editions as a question, but the reason is not clear; the sense is "Who would willingly be absent from Diana's feast? We see that the haunts of the gods are deserted, because they are all anxious to be present."

4. **Cynthia**: Diana was born on Mount Cynthus, in the island of Delos.

5. **Hesperus**: the name given to the planet Venus when it appears in the evening.

7. **lucid**: "shining."

8. **Zephyrus**: the west wind. **Flora**: the goddess of flowers and of spring-time. Zephyrus and Flora were lovers.

9. **bibbers**: "drinkers" (Lat. *bibere*, to drink). "Wine-bibbers" is still used in a contemptuous sense.

13. **pin**: "pine-apples."

14. **savory, latter-mint, basil**: various aromatic herbs. Sweet basil, a kind of mint, was the herb beloved by Keats' Isabella.

17. **hie**: "hasten."

19. **crystalline . . . Aquarius**: these and the following lines as far as "Haste, haste away!" were sent by Keats in a letter to John Hamilton Reynolds (see *Introd.*, p. 9), apparently because Keats was uncertain whether he would let them stand or no and desired Reynolds' advice, for he writes: "By the Whim-King! I'll give you a stanza, because it is not material in connexion, and when I wrote I wanted you—to give your vote, *pro* or *con*." *Crystalline* means "clear as crystal." *The belt of heaven* is the Zodiac, an imaginary

zone or belt of the sky in which the sun appears to move. It is divided into twelve parts or "signs," the names of which are as follows: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricornus, Aquarius, and Pisces. These signs are often referred to also by the English words which have the same meanings, or by other later forms: thus Keats speaks of the Lion (Leo), the Centaur (Sagittarius), and Castor and Pollux, who are the Twins or Gemini.

These signs were originally named after the chief constellations which stood in each, but owing to the effects of precession the constellations now no longer stand in their original signs, the discrepancy amounting to the whole breadth of a sign; thus the constellation Pisces now stands in the sign Aries, and so on.

Later, for astrological purposes, the signs were divided into six solar and six lunar signs, the solar signs being reckoned in order from Leo to Capricornus inclusive, and the lunar backwards from Cancer to Aries, Pisces, and Aquarius. To the sun and moon and each of the principal planets were assigned two signs, called its houses, one solar and the other lunar; thus the sun had Leo solar and Cancer lunar, Mercury had Virgo solar and Gemini lunar, Venus had Libra solar and Taurus lunar, and so on.

It is upon this last fancy that Keats appears to be playing, for he represents the constellations that belong to the lunar signs as having "tamed" or overcome those that belong to the solar signs, in honour of the wedding of Diana or Luna, the moon-goddess. Thus Castor and Pollux (Gemini, lunar) have tamed the Bear (Ursa Major, lying above the solar sign of Leo), and Sagittarius (solar) is also "shent," while Aquarius (a lunar sign) and Andromeda (a constellation lying above the lunar sign of Pisces) join the "bright throng" of guests.

20. to whom . . . fountains: there is perhaps a reminiscence here of Milton,

And let some strange mysterious dream
Wave at his wings, in airy stream
Of lively portraiture displayed.

Aquarius is here supposed to have fountains springing from his shoulders instead of wings. In representations of the Zodiac he is shown pouring water out of a horn.

22. thine illuminings for Dian play: a forced inversion; the words also are strained. "Illuminings" apparently refers to the brightness of Aquarius' watery wings, which he is to set playing like fountains in Diana's honour.

27. Star-Queen's crescent: of course, the moon.

29. Castor: Castor and Pollux were the twin sons of Leda, and were renowned classical demi-gods.

36. far forth . . . heaven: "he is bending his bow to shoot an arrow far away into the sky."

37. shent: "discomfited," literally "disgraced." The present form *shend* (O. E. *scendan*) is found in Spenser.

38. **unrelentor** : i.e. "mercilessly hostile influence."

40. **Andromeda** : the daughter of a king of Ethiopia, who quarrelled with Neptune, and was punished by the appearance of a sea-monster which ravaged his land. Andromeda, to appease the anger of Neptune, was bound to a rock by the sea-shore to be carried off by the monster, but Perseus appeared in time to save her by killing the monster, and was rewarded with the hand of Andromeda. After her death she was made a constellation by Diana.

44. **Danae's Son** : Perseus was the son of Jupiter and Danae.

47. **for all** : "despite the fact that."

49. **Daphne** : a chaste nymph, who was changed into a bay tree by the gods to save her from the love of Apollo. It was for this reason that Apollo chose the bay laurel to be sacred to him ; see note on l. 20.

The chorus breaks off here, for Endymion is borne away and hears no more.

7. ON A LOCK OF MILTON'S HAIR.

In a letter written to Bailey (January 23rd, 1818) Keats thus explains how this Ode came to be written : "I was at Hunt's the other day, and he surprised me with a real authenticated lock of Milton's hair. I know you would like what I wrote thereon, so here it is—as they say of a Sheep in a Nursery Book." Then follows the Ode, and at the end Keats adds : "This I did at Hunt's at his request—perhaps I should have done something better alone and at home."

There is extant a note-book of Hunt's, in which, in the middle of the owner's own verses, appear the first seventeen lines of this Ode, entered in Keats' writing.

In the Ode, which is addressed to Milton, Keats, after acknowledging the rashness of an attempt to eulogise the genius of the poet, registers an oath that later on, when more mature in thought, he will write a hymn in celebration of Milton's work and life. The pledge was not carried out : instead of the "many years" to which Keats here looks forward, he was to have only three more.

The chief interest of this Ode lies in the glimpse it gives us into Keats' mind at this time. He regards his work and life as altogether immature, and looks forward to the calming influence of years, and to a training of the intellect through a study of philosophy, to fit him for his career. The combination of humility with conscious power is remarkable ; and the whole tone accords with Keats' own saying : "The road lies through application, study, and thought. I will pursue it."

1. organic numbers: "harmonious verse," for his command of which Milton is renowned.

2. Scholar of the Spheres: probably because the scene of Milton's great epic is laid partly in heaven and hell, i.e. above or below our earth. There may be an allusion to the spheres in the Ptolemaic system of astronomy deliberately adopted by Milton throughout his work, for which see note on 13. 6.

7. He: Keats himself, or anyone else who should try to write in Milton's honour.

11. how . . . soundest: "how dost thou raise thy song to heaven!"

13. and Discord unconfoundest: "and dost blend discords into harmony"; cp. *L'Allegro*, 143,

Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony.

18. Delian: Delos, one of the islands of the Aegean, was the birthplace of Apollo, the god of song; hence Delian means "poet's."

20. the kernel . . . things above: "that which thou didst love best when on earth, namely, beauty as manifested both in heavenly and in earthly things."

25. grey . . . passion: not only "grey-haired," but also "wise by experience," when the impetuosity of youth has worn itself out.

30. high-rife: "rife" literally means "abundant," and also "active." Probably Keats uses it in the sense of "crowded with active thought."

36. vassal of thy power: "servant of thy will," i.e. any trifle that was once Milton's. A vassal was a dependent, a subject, a tenant.

40. coupled so unaware: "so unexpectedly linked" with an object seemingly commonplace.

42. I thought . . . flood: "it seemed to me that I had known it since the earliest days of the world."

8. TO MAIA.

This beautiful little fragment is on the highest level of Keats' workmanship. It was enclosed in a letter to Reynolds, sent on May 3rd, 1818. After writing of his desire to gain knowledge of every sort, Keats continues: "It is impossible to know how far knowledge will console us for the death of a friend, and the ill 'that flesh is heir to.' With respect to the affections and Poetry you must know by a sympathy my thoughts that way, and I dare say these few lines will be but a ratification: I wrote them on May-day—and intend to finish the ode all in good time."

This fragment, says Mr. de Selincourt, "blends with subtle art two sources of the poet's happiest inspiration—the spirit of Greece as he understood it, and the peaceful beauty of Nature. And, as is often the case, the whole essence of the poem seems to pass into the exquisite use of the commonest words. The epithet 'old' is rarely used by Keats without some sense of yearning after the beauty and the glory of primeval life."

Maia, the mother of Hermes or Mercury by Jupiter, was with her six sisters raised to the dignity of a constellation, that of the Pleiades, which rises in the spring. The Romans regarded their month of May as named after her, and hence Keats addresses to her this May-day Ode.

In it he declares that his wish is to write verse as it used to be written by the Greek and Roman poets, for a narrow circle of listeners: the spring flowers, the width of heaven, the ancient gods, and a few men of his own day are all the audience Keats desires.

3. *Baiæ*: a city near Naples. The baths of *Baiæ* were the most celebrated in Italy, and it was a favourite watering-place of the Romans, the coast being studded with noble and imperial palaces. Keats is referring generally to Latin lyric verse in praise of Spring and May.

5. *earlier Sicilian*: probably a reference to the pastoral poetry of Theocritus, a Greek poet who lived in Sicily in the third century B.C. and wrote in the local Doric dialect.

8. *leaving . . . clan*: Keats means that the Greek poets wrote their immortal verse not for a great nation, but each for his own "clan" or city.

10. *span*: "extent," "spread of the arch."

14. *rich . . . day*: i.e. desiring no immortality of fame, but content with the admiration of his countrymen in his own time. This ode makes pathetic reading: it was Keats' fate never to win audience while he lived, and to be paid for his work by immortal honour after death.

9. ON INDOLENCE.

"You will judge of my 1819 temper," wrote Keats to a friend in the summer of that year, "when I tell you that the thing I have most enjoyed this year has been writing an Ode to Indolence." In the same letter he says: "I have been very idle lately, very averse to writing; both from the overpowering idea of our dead poets and from abatement of my love of fame. I hope I am a little more of a

philosopher than I was, consequently a little less of a versifying pet-lamb."

Earlier in 1819 he had written in another letter: "This morning I am in a sort of temper, indolent and supremely careless. . . . In this state of effeminacy the fibres of the brain are relaxed in common with the rest of the body, and to such a happy degree that pleasure has no show of enticement and pain no unbearable power. Neither Poetry, nor Ambition, nor Love have any alertness of countenance as they pass by me; they seem rather like figures on a Greek vase—a man and two women whom no one but myself could distinguish in their disguisement. This is the only happiness, and is a rare instance of the advantage of the body overpowering the mind."

These passages go far to explain the Ode. Keats imagines himself lying on a lawn half asleep: there appear before his eyes three figures, which pass and repass as if they were carved on the sides of an urn which is being slowly turned round. Twice they move by him, and he does not recognise them, so deep is he sunk in indolent quiet; the third time they turn their heads, and he knows them to be Love, Ambition, and Poesy or the worship of art. The sight of them wakes the drowsy watcher (stanza 4) to a momentary restlessness: he wants wings to follow them.

But he checks himself, and when they return the fourth time (stanza 5) he bids them be gone. He loves indolence better than ambition, or passion, or even the artist's creative energy. Reluctant to face the labour and strife to which they call him, he sinks back and relapses into dreams, of which he has still an ample store.

This Ode represents one side of Keats' genius—its sensuous, dreamy, pleasure-loving element. Keats owned to having an exquisite appreciation of the beautiful, and here he declares himself willing to yield to it even at the expense of manly energy and resolve. It is a mood only, and a mood to which bodily weakness probably contributes something, for Keats had not at that time the stock of vitality natural to a man of three and twenty. At no time, right to the very end, does Keats seem really to have given way to the passionate longing for rest which he here expresses.

This poem was not included among the Odes published in 1820, and it has been suggested that the reason was that it contains many phrases reminiscent of the other poems. Beautiful as it is in places, it falls short of their level of workmanship: it is noble verse, but not Keats at his noblest.

6. to see : "so that one may see."

8. seen : some editors read "green," but the word makes no sense, and is probably only a printer's error.

10. Phidian lore : "the sculptor's art." Phidias was a famous Athenian sculptor of the fifth century B.C. Keats means that the figures depicted on vases are so various that even a skilled artist cannot count upon recognising one at sight.

11. ye : properly the nominative form (O.E. *ge*), while *you* is objective (O.E. *eow*) ; but Shakespeare and other Elizabethans often confuse the two forms, and Keats probably did not know what the correct rule was.

12. so hush a mask : "so quiet a disguise." For *hush* used as an adjective cp. *Hamlet*, II. ii. 468, "The bold winds speechless and the orb below As hush as death."

15. ripe : i.e. it was noon.

18. pain . . . flower : "there was no sharpness in suffering, and no real delight in the pursuit of pleasure."

19. my sense . . . nothingness : "my mind a blank, conscious of nothing but its own vacuity."

22. a moment whiles : "for the space of a moment."

28. whom I love more . . . Poesy : an allusion to the bitter reviews of *Endymion*, which had appeared the year before. unmeek : in August 1819 Keats was writing : "A drummer-boy who holds out his hand familiarly to a field-marshal—that drummer-boy with me is the good word and favour of the public. Who could wish to be among the commonplace crowd of the little famous? . . . This is not wise—I am not a wise man. 'Tis pride." demon : used in the Greek sense of familiar or guardian spirit, the genius often referred to by Shakespeare.

46. in her lids . . . May : a lovely metaphorical painting of those soft cloudy days of spring and early summer, when the air smells of coming rain.

49. O Shadows . . . tears of mine : i.e. it would have been well that the ghostly figures of love, ambition, and poesy should leave him forthwith, while he was still plunged in dreamy indolence ; instead of lingering to rouse him to the work of life, which was sure to bring suffering and tears.

53. dieted . . . sentimental farce : these lines constitute the chief blot in the poem. For an illustrative quotation from Keats' letters see above, p. 84. It is curious to find Keats repeating this very trite and commonplace image with no sign of dissatisfaction. He means, of course, that he does not wish to be petted by the public and fed with flattery.

56. masque-like figures : "masque" here apparently has not the ordinary meaning, as *mask* in line 12, but refers to the Elizabethan masques or pageants, gorgeous scenic entertainments in which dialogue, if heard at all, was subordinate to the beauty of grouping and costume.

59. spright : a common Spenserian form of *spirit*.

10. ON THE MERMAID TAVERN.

These lines "on the Mermaid Tavern" are in reality a brief Ode to the dead and gone Elizabethan poets who were its patrons. Keats can hardly believe that even in the Elysian fields they find better cheer or pleasanter entertainment than at their old haunt.

The Mermaid Tavern was the club-house at which the Elizabethan dramatists and "wits" used to gather. Beaumont writes:—

What things have we seen
Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have been
So nimble and so full of subtle flame,
As if that everyone from whence they came
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
And had resolved to live a fool the rest
Of his dull life.

2. **Elysium**: a place or island in the infernal regions where the souls of the virtuous lived after death, wandering in fields of asphodel beside pleasant rivers in a climate ever serene and soft. The dead heroes were not above amusing themselves with feasting and revelry.

6. **Canary wine**: wine from the Canary islands, much drunk in Elizabethan days. Thus we find Ben Jonson writing, when "Inviting a friend to supper,"

That which most doth take my muse and me
Is a pure cup of rich Canary wine,
Which is the Mermaid's now, but shall be mine.

10. **Robin Hood**: Stow's *Annals* thus describe the famous outlaw Robin Hood and his lieutenant Little John, who "continued in woods," viz. Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire, in the reign of Richard I.: "The said Robert (Robin) entertained an hundred tall men and good archers with such spoils and thefts as he got, upon whom four hundred (were they ever so strong) durst not give the onset. He suffered no woman to be oppressed, violated, or otherwise molested: poor men's goods he spared, abundantly relieving them with that which he got by theft from abbeyes and the houses of rich carles . . . of all thieves the prince and the most gentle thief."

11. **maid Marian**: she shared Robin's exile in the woods.

12. **bowse**: "drink," an Elizabethan word found in Sandys' Ovid; cp. the modern vulgarism "booze." **horn**: "drinking-horn." **can**: an Elizabethan word, "drinking-vessel."

14. **mine host's sign-board**: i.e. the sign-board of mine host of the Mermaid, which no doubt bore the figure of a mermaid.

16. **astrologer's . . . story**: "the old quill pen used by an astrologer told the sheepskin (parchment) on which the astrologer used to write his predictions."

18. **you**: i.e. the "poets dead and gone."

19. *underneath a new-old sign*: the first edition reads "new old-sign," but later editions give the reading here adopted, which makes better sense. The sign-board of the London Mermaid is translated to one of the signs of the Zodiac.

21. *smack*: perhaps "relish," more probably "smacking of the lips."

22. *the Mermaid in the Zodiac*: see note on 6. 19. The sign "Virgo" was represented by a woman's figure ending in a fish's tail, often called the Mermaid. The whole stanza is a complicated play upon the double meanings of "sign of an inn" and "sign of the Zodiac," "Mermaid Tavern" and "Virgo, or the Mermaid."

23. *souls . . . Tavern*: a variant version of this closing stanza reads thus:—

Souls of poets dead and gone,
Are the winds a sweeter home,
Richer is uncellared cavern
Than the merry Mermaid Tavern?

11. TO FANNY.

This Ode is one of the "fugitive poems" of Keats, not published till the Houghton edition of 1848. Probably it never would have been published with Keats' goodwill. There are some fine passages, and others of poor quality, and the workmanship is rather careless throughout.

It is addressed to Fanny Brawne (see *Introd.*, p. 11), and is the expression of a mood which betrays itself in one of Keats' letters to that lady, written in July 1819: "At night, when the lonely day has closed, and the lonely, silent, unmusical chamber is waiting to receive me as into a sepulchre, then, believe me, my passion gets entirely the sway; then I would not have you see those rhapsodies which I once thought it impossible I should ever give way to."

Again: "I have never known any unalloyed happiness for many days together; the death or sickness of some one has always spoilt my hours; and now, when none such troubles oppress me, it is, you must confess, very hard that another sort of pain should haunt me. . . . In case of the worst that can happen, I shall still love you—but what hatred shall I have for another! Some lines I read the other day are continually ringing a peal in my ears:—

To see those eyes I prize above mine own
Dart favours on another—
And those sweet lips, yielding immortal nectar,
Be gently pressed by any but myself—
Think, think, Francesca, what a cursed thing
It were beyond expression!"

The whole of this poem expresses the miserable jealousy of a lover whose passion is poisoned by uncertainty.

1. physician . . . blood : a metaphor which to us seems unpoetical, but which Keats had met over and over again in his favourite Elizabethans. The allusion is to the old medical practice of bleeding a sick man for the relief of his disease ; here the writing of the poem is to relieve Keats of the burden of his own thoughts.

3. Tripod : a change of metaphor ; the poet compares himself to the priestess of the oracle of Apollo at Delphi, who was placed upon a tripod over a hole in the temple floor. At certain seasons vapour issued from the hole, and by it the priestess was inspired to prophesy.

8. beckon . . . air : i.e. "do not drive me forth into the icy coldness" of jealousy.

17. who now . . . so soon : it has been pointed out that the idea of these lines is to be found in a passage underlined by Keats himself in his own copy of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) : "They cannot look off whom they love : they will *impregnare eam ipsis oculis*, deflower her with their eyes : be still gazing, staring, stealing faces, smiling, glancing at her." Keats is jealous of every glance cast at his lady.

27. the dance's dangerous wreath : Burton further ranks dancing as "none of the least" among "artificial allurements" to passion.

36. must not a woman . . . the mead : Keats had a curiously low opinion of women, and even falling in love had not modified it much with regard to women in general. In the autumn of 1818 he had written of "the generality of women—who appear to me as children to whom I would rather give a sugar-plum than my time." It is here that his youth betrays itself : his mind was least mature in all relations with women. That he was aware of the fact and regretted it appears from another letter : "I am certain I have not a right feeling towards women. . . . When I am among women I have evil thoughts, malice, spleen." Nevertheless, in his relations with his young sister he was a pattern of brotherly common sense and loving playfulness.

40. blow-ball : "thistle-down," cp. Keats' burlesque *Spenserian Stanzas* on Charles Armitage Brown :—

With bushy head of hair,
As hath the seeded thistle, when in parle
It holds the Zephyr, ere it sendeth fair
Its light balloons into the summer air.

51. Holy See : a see is the seat or jurisdiction of a bishop or archbishop, the term "the Holy See" commonly denoting the see of Rome. Keats prays his lady not to allow any stranger to profane the place that should be kept holy for him alone.

52. rude : "rough." break the sacramental cake : the reference is of course to the wafer broken by the priest at the celebration of Mass.

12. TO FANCY.

This very beautiful poem is addressed to "Fancy," as writers of the Restoration period termed what we call "Imagination."

The central thought is that of the power of the imagination. Reality is beautiful, but it can never satisfy. True content can only be found in the joys of the mind, of which, precisely because we can never altogether grasp them, we never weary. It is the same tone as that which echoes through the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*.

The poem falls into the following roughly defined sections:—
(1-9) Introduction: an invocation of Fancy. (10-15) Summer, spring, and autumn, the seasons of highest natural beauty, can never give real and lasting delight, because of the imperfection and weariness which belong to all earthly pleasures. (15-66) The true season for the poet is winter. Then, as he sits by the fireside, he sends his fancy on her travels, and she brings him all the joys of all the seasons in their ideal perfection. (67-89) And not only will she bring the beauties of external nature, but also the ideal of love. No earthly woman can ever satisfy: however fair she is, the poet will weary of her. But his fancy will conceive for him an ideal mistress. (89-94) Let Fancy go forth then on her creative errand.

The influence of Milton is clearly visible in the exquisite metrical harmony of the poem. Echoes are caught from *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, both consisting mainly of seven-syllabled couplets, and also, still more plainly, from the song of the Attendant Spirit at the close of *Comus*.

The Ode was sent by Keats in a letter to George and Georgiana Keats (Dec. 1818-Jan. 1819), together with the next (13. *Bards of Passion and of Mirth*) and another fragmentary poem written to music. Keats writes: "Here are the poems: they will explain themselves, as all poems should do, without any comment."

1. **Fancy**: in Elizabethan times this word meant "love," "passion" (cp. *Merchant of Venice*, III. ii. 63, "Tell me where is fancy bred?"). Later, in the Restoration Age, it came to mean "imagination," and is so used here. Finally, Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria* (1812) distinguishes between imagination and fancy, calling Milton imaginative and Cowley fanciful. The modern "fancy" retains both meanings in a slightly contemptuous sense: our "fancy" is less sublime than imagination, less strong than love.

16. **ingle**: "fire," "hearth," from Latin *igniculus*, "a little fire." The ingle-nook, or seat beside the hearth, is a familiar sight in old houses and inns.

17. **sear**: "dry," "withered."

18. spirit . . . night: the flames are the very spirit or genius of winter.

19. when . . . shoon: this picture of winter perhaps owes a hint to the song at the close of *Love's Labour's Lost*, "When icicles hang by the wall."

21. shoon: "shoes," an archaic form found in Chaucer and Shakespeare; revived by Chatterton, and still heard in dialect.

23. dark conspiracy: the allusion is to the short, dark, winter days, which, says Keats, have no evening at all.

26. a mind self-overawed: "a mind conscious of its own awful powers."

28. vassals: the faculties of the imagination.

33. all the buds . . . spray: in the MS. of the letter there are a few divergences from the printed version, of which one is seen in a variant form of this couplet:—

All the fairy buds of May
On spring turf or scented spray.

36. stealth: "invisible procedure."

38. three fit wines: the blending of three wines in a wine-cup stands for the union of spring, summer, and autumn delights in Fancy's pageant of the seasons. Winter is omitted, of course, as the real season in which the poet is living, and not a joy of the imagination.

42. antheming: cp. 14. 75, "thy plaintive anthem."

44. the early April lark: cp. the Spring song at the close of *Love's Labour's Lost*, "When daisies pied," with its allusions to larks and daisies (48) and nesting rooks (45).

51. hyacinth: the wild hyacinth, or blue-bell, with its bells of shaded sapphire-blue, which lies like a smoke over woodland glades in May.

54. pearled . . . shower: because these flowers of all seasons are imagined as blooming all at the same moment.

56. meagre . . . sleep: Keats was probably thinking not of field-mice, but of dormice; it is the latter that hibernate.

57. winter-thin: after sleeping through the winter the snake comes out in spring and casts its slough.

81. Ceres' daughter: Proserpina, who was carried off by Pluto, king of the world of the dead. Ceres, who was the goddess of the fruits of the earth, mourned for Proserpina so inconsolably that all our harvests were spoilt, and Jupiter sent Mercury to fetch Proserpina back; but Proserpina had unwisely eaten part of a pomegranate among the Shades, with the result that even Mercury could not wholly free her, and thenceforward she spent four months of every year in the nether world and the rest with her mother.

82. God of Torment: Pluto.

85. Hebe: the goddess of youth and cup-bearer of the gods in Olympus. zone: "girdle."

87. kirtle: a sort of petticoat, probably a diminutive of *skirt*.

13. "BARDS OF PASSION."

In Keats' copy of the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher this Ode is found written on a blank page facing the tragi-comedy of *The Fair Maid of the Inn*. It seems therefore to be addressed to these two "bards" in particular." See also the Introduction to the *Ode to Fancy*, p. 89.

Beaumont (? 1585-1616) and Fletcher (1579-1625) were twin stars of the so-called "later Elizabethan drama," their works being produced under James I. Among the chief of these are *Philaster*, *The Maid's Tragedy*, *A King and no King*, and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*.

This passage, abridged from Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, will show how aptly Keats' opening line fits these playwrights: "They understood and imitated the conversation of gentlemen, whose wild debaucheries and quickness of wit in repartees no poet can ever paint as they have done. They represented all the passions very lively, but above all love. Their plays are now the most pleasant and frequent entertainments of the stage; the reason is because there is a certain gaiety in their comedies, and pathos in their more serious plays, which suits generally with all men's humours."

In the opening quatrain Keats declares that the dead poets have left their souls on earth, that is, that they still live for us in their works, and he goes on to ask whether they have in fact each a second soul, a dual existence, in the Elysian fields. Answering yes to his own questions, he describes the life of the bards in the other world in a passage the haunting beauty of which recalls many similar passages scattered broadcast over English literature from the dim dawn of Anglo-Saxon lyricism, and he ends by declaring that the souls of the poets, as they live for us in their works on earth, serve as prophets to teach us wisdom and lead us to the same place whither their other souls are gone before.

Keats wrote of this Ode: "It is on the double immortality of poets. . . . These (this and the *Ode to Fancy*) are specimens of a sort of rondeau which I think I shall become partial to, because you have one idea amplified with greater ease and more delight and freedom than in the sonnet." As a matter of fact the rondeau is an elaborate fixed form of verse, with which neither of these Odes has anything in common beyond the fact that they, like the rondeau, contain refrains or repetitions of the same lines.

6. spheres of sun and moon : an allusion to the Ptolemaic system of astronomy, which Keats' beloved Milton deliberately adopted in *Paradise Lost*. In this system the earth was the centre of the universe, and the sun, moon, and other planets, with the fixed stars, were set in a series of hollow, revolving, solid spheres—the earth being as it were the kernel—which made music as they moved. Cp. *The Merchant of Venice*, V. i. 60:—

There's not the smallest orb which thou beholdest
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins.

8. *parle* : "parley," "conference," a not uncommon Elizabethan word ; cp. *Hamlet*, I. i. 62, "In an angry parle," and *Comus*, in the song to Echo, "Sweet queen of parley."

11. *Elysian lawns* : the Elysian fields, where wandered the shades or souls of the Blessed after death.

12. *browsed . . . fawns* : apparently because in the realm of the dead love and passion are banished. Diana was the goddess of chastity. These and the following lines irresistibly remind us of the Spirit's song at the end of *Comus*, "There eternal Summer dwells."

13. *tented* : "housed" ; the word refers to the tent-like shape of the blue-bell.

18. *a senseless, tranced thing* : "mere music that has no meaning poured forth as if by one in a trance."

28. *cloying* : "to cloy" is "to satiate." Here the participle is intransitive ; cp. 15. 30, "parching tongue."

30. *week* : used of the whole life of a man.

14. TO A NIGHTINGALE.

The following is Charles Brown's account of the origin of this poem : "In the spring of 1819 a nightingale had built her nest near my house" (Wentworth Place, Hampstead, where Keats was then living with Brown). "Keats felt a tranquil and continual joy in her song, and one morning he took his chair from the breakfast-table to the grass-plot under a plum-tree, where he sat for two or three hours. When he came into the house, I perceived that he had some scraps of paper in his hand, and these he was quietly thrusting behind the books." These "scraps," in reality two half-sheets, bore the Ode, which Brown, with Keats' help, arranged in the due order of the stanzas.

The following is a brief analysis of the Ode. Keats, listening to the nightingale's song, is oppressed by its beauty and joy (stanza 1) and longs by the aid of a cup of wine to escape to the world of the forest (2), far from the cares and sorrows of daily life (3). Poesy

shall bear him away ; he finds himself transported to the woodland world (4) in all the beauty of early summer (5). The intolerable power of pure beauty makes him long for death (6). With his own mortality he contrasts the immortality of the nightingale (7). The closing of this stanza with the word "forlorn" calls up a train of other associations which wake him from his dream : he cannot escape as easily as he has pretended. The song of the nightingale fades away in the distance, and the poet returns, half dazed, to real life.

Many poets have written odes to birds ; among the most famous of these are Wordsworth's *To a Skylark* and *To a Cuckoo*, and Shelley's *To a Skylark*. The last of these is the closest parallel to Keats' wonderful poem. Tastes differ ; but Keats has nothing to fear from the comparison.

3. emptied . . . to the drains : i.e. drained the cup.

4. Lethe-wards : "into oblivion." Lethe was a river of the Lower World, from which the shades of the dead drank to obtain forgetfulness of the past.

6. being : i.e. "'tis because I am " too happy in thy singing that I feel this pain and sense of numbness, which spring from excess of gladness. Throughout the poem runs the thought that our imperfect nature is not framed to bear that excess and purity of joy which are the properties of the soulless creature of the woods.

7. Dryad : the Dryads were tree-nymphs, who were born and died with the trees which were their dwelling.

8. melodious plot : "group of trees that echo with thy music."

9. beechen green : "the green of beech trees" ; *beechen* is an adjectival form.

13. Flora : the goddess of flowers and spring.

14. Provençal song : a reference to the medieval troubadours of southern France, the sweet singers of Languedoc and Provence.

15. a beaker : "a goblet." full of the warm South : the wines of the South of Europe are of course famous. Keats prays that all the richness of the warm Southern sunshine may have passed into his wine.

16. blushful : "blushing," "red-glowing." Hippocrene : "the fountain of the Horse," in Mount Helicon, sacred to the Muses, and said to have been produced by a blow from the hoof of the winged steed of the Muses, Pegasus. This fountain was supposed to have had the power to inspire those who drank of it. Keats blends the thought of wine with that of this inspiring water.

17. winking : "coming and going," "quickly breaking."

23. the fever and the fret : cp. Wordsworth's *Lines written above Tintern Abbey* : "the fretful stir Unprofitable and the fever of the world."

26. where youth . . . dies : no doubt the death of Keats' younger brother Tom in the autumn of 1818 is running in the mind of the writer.

29. where Beauty . . . to-morrow : i.e. where love can no more be firm and constant than beauty can be permanent.

32. not charioted . . . pards : another allusion to Titian's picture; cp. *Intro. to the Ode to Sorrow* (p. 75).

34. though . . . retards : the pure intellect or reason hinders the free play of imagination.

36. the Queen-Moon . . . Fays : the phrase is probably due to association of the moon with Titania, queen of the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Titania was a classical epithet of Diana, and in the play she seems to combine the rank of fairy queen with that of moon-goddess.

42. incense : cp. Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, "incense-bearing tree." All country folk are familiar with the delicious faint scent of fruit-blossom.

43. embalmed darkness : "sweet-scented gloom."

44. the seasonable month : "the month that brings forth the flowers in their season."

46. the pastoral eglantine : the eglantine is properly sweet-briar, but is here, as often, used for honeysuckle, and called pastoral because it is sung of over and over again in pastoral poetry; cp. *L'Allegro* : "Through the sweet-briar, or the vine, Or the twisted eglantine."

49. musk-rose : by this Keats means the wild rose, as appears from *Endymion* :—

the mid-forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms.

51. darkling : "in the dark." for : here a preposition, but most nearly rendered by "whereas."

52. in love . . . Death : the feeling expressed in the close of this stanza appears from time to time in several passages of Keats' verse, and notably in the sonnet "Why did I laugh to-night?" which ends :

I know this being's lease ;
My fancy to its utmost blisses spreads ;
Yet could I on this very midnight cease,
And the world's gaudy ensigns see in shreds ;
Verse, Fame, and Beauty are intense indeed,
But Death intenser—Death is Life's high need.

55. rich : "precious," "pleasant" ; this use of *rich* is characteristic of Keats ; cp. "rich anger," 18. 18.

60. to thy . . . sod : i.e. "I should have become a thing of dead clay that could hear nothing of the noble funeral song chanted over me."

66. Ruth . . . in tears : Keats lets his imagination play round the beautiful tale of Ruth, who followed the fortunes of Naomi, and went gleanings among the fields of Boaz.

67. *alien corn*: "cornfields of a foreign land," i.e. Judah. Ruth was a Moabitess.

68. *the same . . . forlorn*: "the same song that often in days of old has unlocked magic casements which look out over the foam of perilous seas, in the solitary countries of faery." *Faery lands* are not so much countries where the fairies live—for that matter they used to live in England—but rather "legendary countries of romance," with probably an underlying thought of the realm of faery in which befel the adventures of Spenser's Faery Queen and her knights.

Critics trace in this famous stanza an allusion to Claude's picture of the "Enchanted Castle," of which Keats had already written a detailed study in his Epistle to Reynolds.

It has been objected that the thought here lacks logic; for the nightingale is not really immortal any more than man is. But Keats is in fact addressing not the bird itself, but its song; the bird is to him, like Wordsworth's cuckoo, no bird, but "a wandering voice." The individual dies, but the species continues, and the processes of Nature go on without changing from age to age.

72. *sole*: "solitary," "lonely."

74. *elf*: the influence of Spenser and his Elfin knights is probably responsible for Keats' use of this word.

15. ON A GRECIAN URN.

The inspiration of this poem is said to have been partly derived from a marble urn belonging to Lord Holland, and still preserved in the garden at Holland House, Kensington; but it is fairly certain that Keats is also thinking of Greek sculpture in general, as revealed to him by the famous Elgin marbles. Lord Holland's urn represents the scene of a sacrifice. An altar bearing fruit is carved in the midst; near by stands a priest, and above is a figure playing on a pipe. Other details recalling Keats' conception are two trees, and a bull that is brought to be slain.

The following is a brief analysis. Keats addresses the Urn: what is the legend which is carved on its sides? (1). He passes to direct consideration of that sculptured legend: the flute-players, the youth singing under the trees, the lovers about to kiss (2). The carven life—the silent music of the marble pipes, the unuttered song, the love that never reaches fruition—all this life of imagery and imagination is more real and more enviable than the human life of audible melody and tangible embraces; of love especially is this true, for the fruition of human love never brings real happiness (2, 3).

Hitherto Keats has confined himself to the actual figures on the Urn. In the next stanza (4) he not only animates the marble, but goes beyond it to create a whole landscape of river and seashore and city in which the carven figures can live and move. Finally (5) he draws the moral of the Urn, which is also the moral of his whole life's work: the generations of men pass and die, but amid the changes and chances of this mortal life Beauty and Truth—not two things, not even twin things, but one and the same thing seen from different aspects—are permanent for ever.

The central thought of this Ode is Keats' main contribution to the sum of speculative thought in and since his day. Generations of artists have based and are basing both faith and practice on Keats' creed. As soon as the notion of the unity of truth and beauty is lost from sight, we get weak art, false art, evil art; the school of gross realism on one side, the school of ornament for ornament's sake on another. Midway between the two stands Keats, holding up his own severe ideal like a torch. To the one he says, "Your work is not beautiful, therefore ultimately it cannot be true: there is a flaw in your foundations." To the other, and perhaps more sternly: "Your work is not true, and therefore necessarily it has no beauty: it may have for a day the false semblance of beauty, but it cannot endure; for it is built on no foundations at all."

What right has Keats thus to lay down the law? The right of a master-mind: who by his work has illustrated his principles: whose work, now that nearly a century has gone by, is by the suffrages of our men of letters confirmed in the very highest rank of art; from whom if we differ we differ at our own peril, as much as if we differed from a great scientist in science, or from a great musician in music.

1. *thou still unravish'd . . . slow Time*: addressed to the urn itself. The ideas conveyed in these lines are those of silent repose and great age, such as nothing conveys more plainly than the aspect of time-worn sculpture.

3. *sylvan . . . rhyme*: Keats seems to be thinking partly of the urn's situation under the trees of a garden, and partly of the forest scenes carved on it.

5. *what leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape*: "what is the tale of old adventure under the forest trees that is sculptured on thy sides?"

7. *Tempe*: a beautiful valley in Thessaly, on the eastern coast of northern Greece. *Arcady*: Arcadia, "the Switzerland of Greece," a country in the middle of Peloponnesus, famed in pastoral poetry.

10. **ecstasy**: literally "a standing out of" oneself, properly used of any kind of violent emotion, though now chiefly limited to frenzied joy.

11. **heard melodies . . . sweeter**: anticipations of this thought have been found in Wordsworth's *Excursion* (3. 710):—

music of finer tone, and harmony,
So do I call it, though it be the hand
Of silence, though there be no voice,

and in his *Personal Talk*:—

sweetest melodies
Are those which are by distance made more sweet.

But Wordsworth neither sounds the full depth of the thought nor gives it, as Keats does, its perfect and permanent setting.

13. **sensual**: "bodily." **more endear'd**: "more dear" to the listener.

28. **all . . . above**: i.e. "far above all passion that draws the breath of human life."

29. **high-sorrowful and cloy'd**: Shakespearean condensation, Shakespearean felicity, but not Shakespearean thought. Sorrow, satiety, and self-disdain do not follow such love as is enshrined in Shakespeare's great sonnet, "Let me not to the marriage of true minds Admit impediment."

32. **green altar**: an altar of turf. Such sacrifices as that described in this stanza were of course a common feature of Greek religious ceremonial.

36. **mountain-built . . . citadel**: either "built among the mountains with a citadel ('fortress') in its midst," or, more probably, "built at the foot of a hill whereon a citadel stands."

37. **its**: in the MSS. as well as in the original editions the word is *this*, doubtless by a slip of the pen. **this pious morn**: "this morning of a holy day."

41. **Attic**: strictly "Athenian," but used in the general sense of "Greek." **brede**: the sense of this word may be either "embroidery," as in Collins' *Ode to Evening*, "with brede ethereal wove"; or "breadth," as in *The Floure and the Lefe*, a poem in Keats' day attributed to Chaucer, "a path of litel brede." Since in the only other passage where Keats uses this archaio word (*Lamia*, 158: "her silver mail and golden brede") the meaning is obviously "embroidery," it is probable that the sense is the same here. Very likely, however, Keats had in mind a dim consciousness of the other meaning as well.

44. **tease us . . . eternity**: "daunt us, force us to give up vain speculation, as does the thought of eternity."

45. **Pastoral**: pastoral verse is strictly that which deals with shepherds (*pastores*) and shepherdesses, but the term is often applied to all verse that deals with country life and country folk of any

sort; so the urn, on which are carved country scenes, is a piece of pastoral sculpture.

47. other woe than ours: "the sorrows of time to come, when men will suffer in ways of which we as yet know nothing."

49. beauty is truth . . . need to know: many editors print the first phrase in inverted commas: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," and leave the rest of the couplet as Keats' personal feeling. This reading is that of the first edition, and has therefore strong claims. In the MSS., however, there are no inverted commas, and in another edition, usually trustworthy, the punctuation is that reproduced in the present edition.

In this conflict of evidence, the text that gives the best sense has been adopted; it seems more natural to assign the whole couplet to the Urn's voice than to imagine that Keats himself suddenly, and for the first time in the Ode, turns to address the reader.

16. TO PSYCHE.

This Ode was sent by Keats to George and Georgiana Keats in America in a letter of April 1819. Keats wrote: "The following poem—the last I have written—is the first and the only one with which I have taken even moderate pains. I have for the most part dash'd off my lines in a hurry. This I have done leisurely. I think it reads the more richly for it, and will, I hope, encourage me to write other things in even a more peaceable and healthy spirit. You must recollect that Psyche was not embodied as a goddess before the time of Apuleius the Platonist, who lived after the Augustan age, and consequently the Goddess was never worshipped or sacrificed to with any of the ancient fervour—and perhaps never thought of in the old religion. I am more orthodox than to let a heathen Goddess be so neglected."

The legend of Psyche was told by Apuleius in *The Golden Ass*, of which a beautiful translation was written by Adlington, an Elizabethan scholar. Psyche was a king's daughter in Greece, who by her beauty incurred the jealousy of Aphrodite. Cupid was dispatched by his mother to inspire Psyche with love for some base fellow, but fell in love with her himself, and carried her to a beautiful valley, where he visited her every night under cover of the dark. At length curiosity provoked Psyche to light a lamp, when she recognised the beauty of the God of Love. But a drop of hot oil fell on Cupid's shoulder: the god awoke in anger and fled.

After many wanderings she fell into Aphrodite's power and was

kept as her slave. A series of impossible tasks was set her, but thanks to the aid of birds and ants she performed them all. Finally she was forgiven by Aphrodite, reunited to Cupid, and made an immortal. The fable typifies the purification of the human soul by passion and suffering.

In this Ode Keats addresses Psyche, and asks to be forgiven for telling her secrets even to herself. He has had that day a vision, or dream, of two fair creatures lying side by side among flowers in a wood, and has recognised in them Cupid and Psyche (1). The next stanza (2) describes the goddess, and refers to the fact that she was not made immortal till the days of simple religious faith and observance were gone by; hence she has never been duly worshipped. He offers himself as her worshipper. In the last stanza (3) this idea is worked out in detail. Keats seems to regard Psyche as the personification of Beauty rather than of the human soul.

1. *tuneless numbers*: metrical, not musical, harmony.

2. *by sweet . . . dear*: an obvious reminiscence of *Lycidas*, 6, "bitter constraint and sad occasion dear."

4. *soft-conched*: one of Keats' exquisite compound words. It cannot be rendered in plain prose, but calls up a perfect image of the soft and shell-shaped ear of the goddess. A conch is a sea-shell.

6. *with awaken'd eyes*: this phrase refers of course to the writer, not to Psyche. 7. *thoughtlessly*: "in a careless, dreamy mood."

10. *roof*: originally written *fan*. It is curious that Keats should have thrown away the rhyme.

11. *trembled*: "set trembling" by the wind.

13. *'mid . . . fragrant-eyed*: every beauty that flowers have—scent, form, stillness, coolness, colouring—is summed up in this and the next line.

14. *blue . . . Tyrian*: originally written "blue, freckle-pink, and budded Syrian." *Tyrian* or *Syrian* would equally convey the idea of the purple dye obtained from Mediterranean shell-fish and exported from Tyre, a city which formed part of the Syrian empire.

15. *bedded grass*: "the grass of which they had made a bed."

17. *bade adieu*: cp. 18. 23. There are in the present Ode several echoes or anticipations of other Odes.

20. *at tender . . . aurean love*: "when young Love should open their eyelids, like 'the opening eyelids of the morn'" (cp. *Lycidas*, 26). Aurora is the goddess of dawn.

25. *Olympus*: a lofty range of mountains in Thessaly. In early Greek mythology the gods were held to live on the peaks of the range itself; later, however, they were relegated to the vault of heaven, to which the name of their old home was then transferred. *hierarchy*: "divine government." For the reason why Psyche is called latest-born of the gods and goddesses see *Introd.*, p. 98.

26. **Phoebe**: an epithet of Diana, the moon-goddess. **sapphire-region'd star**: the planet Venus, shining in the sapphire blue of a summer evening sky. Venus is often known as the moon-star.

30. **delicious moan**: cp. "tears of perfect moan" in Milton's epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester.

32. **no voice, no lute, etc.**: from this point to the end of the verse there are repeated echoes of the nineteenth stanza of Milton's *Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*:—

The oracles are dumb,
No voice or hideous hum
Runs through the arch'd roof in words deceiving.
Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
No nightly trance or breathed spell
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.

Not only in the main thought and in the references to an "oracle" and to a "pale-mouth'd prophet," but still more markedly in the cadence of the lines and the wail—there is no other word for it—of the iterated, stressed, long vowels, Keats' stanza recalls Milton's.

34. **shrine**: "oracle," see note on 11. 3.

38. **when holy . . . the fire**: a reference to the nature-worship of the Romans: every element had its patron deity. It has been said of Keats himself that "he never saw an oak-tree without beholding the Dryad."

41. **lucent fans**: "shining wings."

42. **faint Olympians**: the gods are called faint because the days of their rule are gone by. By the epithet Keats makes us realise the passing of the generations: "the old order changeth, giving place to new."

52. **where branched thoughts . . . wind**: in these lines and in the rest of the stanza Keats develops in detail his fantastic metaphor. His mind is the forest, full of the varied beauty of nature and myth; his thoughts are the pine trees, in the midst of which he will build a fane or temple dedicated to the worship of Psyche; the flowers are apparently his verses, tended by "the gardener Fancy," and the rose-clad temple of poetry is to be prepared and thrown open for the entrance of Psyche. Probably by the "fane" he means the ode, which with this beautiful imagery he brings to a close.

54. **far . . . by steep**: Ruskin observes that "Keats, as is his way, puts nearly all that may be said of the pine into one verse, though they are only figurative pines of which he is speaking . . . (men) must not leave unread, in considering the influence of trees upon the human soul, that marvellous *Ode to Psyche*." Keats draws here upon what he had seen himself, for in a letter to Tom Keats written from Keswick in June 1818 he had described the fall of Lodore thus: "it oozed out from a cleft in perpendicular rocks, all fledged with ash and other beautiful trees."

57. moss-lain : "couched upon moss." Dryads : see note on 3. 5. Dryads and Hamadryads were the same.

61. buds, and bells, and stars : i.e. flower-buds, and blossoms that open into bells and stars.

63. who breeding . . . the same : the gardener in an ordinary garden can produce, by grafting and so on, new varieties ; but his skill is small compared with the creative fertility of the poet, whose flowers of verse are never twice alike.

66. a casement . . . Love in : see *Introd.*, p. 98.

17. TO AUTUMN.

In September 1819 Keats wrote to John Hamilton Reynolds from Winchester : "How beautiful the season is now—how fine the air—a temperate sharpness about it ! Really, without joking, chaste weather : Dian skies ! I never liked stubble-fields so much as now—aye, better than the chilly green of the Spring. Somehow, a stubble-field looks warm in the same way that some pictures look warm. This struck me so much in my Sunday's walk that I composed upon it." This composition was the *Ode To Autumn*.

Its three stanzas show a gradual rise of thought. In the first Autumn is viewed as the season itself, doing the season's work, bringing all the fruits of the earth to maturity in readiness for harvesting. In the second Autumn, personified in woman's shape, is present at the various operations of the harvest and the vintage. In the last stanza the close of the year is associated with sunset, the songs of Spring are over and night is falling ; but the sense of sadness is merged in the feeling of the continuous life of nature, which eternally renews itself in insect and animal and bird ; and the close of the Ode, though solemn, breathes the spirit of hope.

4. eves : "the clipped edge of a thatched roof," a more correct form than the more usual *eaves*, the Old English form being *efese*. The word is singular by origin, though now treated as a plural.

5. bend : apple-branches in a good season are often bowed nearly to the ground with their weight of fruit.

7. gourd : here used probably of the pumpkin.

11. o'erbrimm'd . . . cells : "filled the sticky cells of the honey-comb to overflowing."

15. winnowing : "fanning," "fluttering" ; the wind ruffles and parts the locks of hair.

17. fume : "smoke," hence "heavy narcotic scent." Opium is obtained from some varieties of poppy.

18. swath : "the width of the sweep of a scythe."

19. like a gleaner: "in the character of a gleaner."

21. cider-press: the apples are crushed in a press, whence the juice is strained into a receptacle below.

25. barred clouds: the "fall clouds" which often gather at sunset in long lines above the west. bloom: "redden"; through the clouds the light falls flushed and warm.

27. wailful choir: an echo of Endymion, l. 450, "a wailful gnat." The literal meaning of *choir* is "a band of dancers or singers" (Greek *choros*): hence the word applies with peculiar vividness to the dancing, humming swarms of gnats on warm autumn evenings.

28. salwos: low trees or shrubs of the willow variety.

30. bourn: "a boundary," here no doubt used of the hills that bound the landscape.

31. hedge-cricket: "grasshoppers." In an early sonnet, *On the Grasshopper and Cricket*, Keats wrote that the cricket's song in winter

Seems to one in drowsiness half lost
The Grasshopper's amid some grassy hilla.

treble soft: the note of the robin is at once high, bold, and delicate.

32. croft: "a field." This line is perhaps an echo of a line of Thomson's *Seasons*: "The blackbird whistles from the thorny brake."

33. gathering swallows: i.e. preparing to migrate.

18. ON MELANCHOLY.

This Ode as first written opened with the following stanza:—

Though you should build a bark of dead men's bones,
And rear a phantom gibbet for a mast,
Stitch shrouds together for a sail, with groans
To fill it out, blood-stained and aghast;
Although your rudder be a dragon's tail,
Long sever'd, yet still hard with agony,
Your cordage large uprootings from the skull
Of bald Medusa, certes you would fail
To find the Melancholy—whether she
Dreameth in any isle of Lethe dull.

Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, which the poet was reading about this time, and which he admired for its fantastic and forcible images, may have suggested the general style and tone of these lines, which were omitted by Keats from the printed version. They have a quaint vigour of their own, but are altogether out of harmony with what follows: the whole colouring of the picture is different.

In the printed version Keats retained the next succeeding lines unaltered: hence comes their seeming abruptness.

The main thought of the poem is that true melancholy lies not in the sad and ugly things of life, not in death or the accompaniments

of death, but in everything that is beautiful and joyful: in April showers, and roses, and the eyes of the woman beloved. It is the "ache at the heart of felicity," the "sense of tears in mortal things" which has haunted poets from Vergil to Herrick and from Herrick to our own day.

One would expect to find in this Ode echoes of Milton's invocation to Melancholy in *Il Penseroso*, but the scope and thought of the two poems are altogether different, and it is hard to trace any parallelism.

1. **no, no! go not to Lethe**: this follows naturally from the omitted stanza, in which those who seek to find Melancholy are bidden not to look for her in the places which are commonly supposed to be her peculiar dwelling. **Lethe**: a river in the Lower World, by drinking from which the spirits of the dead obtained forgetfulness.

2. **wolf's-bane**: the poisonous plant called aconite or monk's-hood. *Bane* = "harm." The plant was anciently used as a bait for wolf-traps.

4. **nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine**: for Proserpina's union with the king of the underworld see note on 12. 81. The "ruby grape" refers probably to the vivid red berries of the woody nightshade, which is very commonly confused with the rare and black-fruited deadly nightshade, the most dangerous of British poisonous plants.

5. **rosary**: the string of beads by which Roman Catholics count their prayers. **yew-berries**: it is really the foliage and not the berry of the yew that is poisonous; but perhaps Keats is only thinking of the frequent association of the tree with churchyards.

6. **beetle**: no doubt Keats means the so-called "death-watch," a beetle which lives in walls and woodwork generally, and which by drumming with its head produces a sound of rapid tapping believed by many to be a presage of the death of some person in the house. The action is really a call to its mate. **death-moth**: the death's head hawk-moth, so called because the markings on its thorax closely resemble a skull. As it flies it utters a low, plaintive sound.

7. **your mournful Psyche**: Psyche, who typifies the soul of man, is generally represented as having the wings of a butterfly. See Introduction to the Ode *To Psyche*, p. 98. **owl**: the bird of night, associated, like all the other objects and creatures named in the stanza, with gloom and mourning.

9. **for shade . . . of the soul**: i.e. instead of appreciating the fine savour of sorrow, the sufferer will be lulled into drowsiness by the soothing influence of melancholy associations.

13. **the droop-headed flowers all**: "all those flowers that hang down their heads."

14. **an April shroud**: "a shroud of April rain."

15. **morning rose**: "a rose that blooms in the morning," as opposed to the creatures of night.

16. the rainbow . . . sand-wave : the iridescence sometimes produced by the play of sunlight on sand left wet by a retreating wave.

17. globed : "globe-shaped."

18. or if thy mistress . . . peerless eyes : weakness inevitably betrays itself in the allusion to love. Keats is no doubt thinking of Fanny Brawne (Introd., p. 11), whom, overwhelming as was his passion for her, he seems to have regarded rather as the incarnation of his ideal of beauty than as a living, reasoning woman. rich : cp. note on 14. 55.

21. she : i.e. Melancholy.

23. aching Pleasure nigh : i.e. Melancholy dwells close to the pleasure whose keenness merges into pain.

24. turning . . . sips : the bee is the emblem of the pleasure-seeker ; the sweetness of joy turns to poison as soon as it is tasted.

26. sovran : the older and more correct form of "sovereign" (Low Lat. *superanus*, Fr. *souverain*). Cp. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I. 245, "He who now is Sovran." The modern spelling is due to confusion with *reign* (Lat. *regnum*).

27. though seen . . . palate fine : i.e. only those can appreciate the finest shades of melancholy who can equally appreciate the ecstasies of joy.

30. cloudy trophies : by a piece of fantastic imagery the souls of men are likened to clouds, which are hung as trophies in the airy shrine of Melancholy. A trophy is properly the monument of an enemy's defeat.

